Form and Spirit of
Vedic Ritual Worship :

Procedure of Yagya



- PANDIT SHRIRAM SHARMA ACHARYA

FORM AND SPIRIT OF VEDIC RITUAL WORSHIP: PROCEDURE OF YAGYA

(*Karmkaṇḍa Bhāskar – Yagya Vidhī*)

Author

Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya

Translated by

K. Poddar

Edited by

Shambhu Dass

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Key to Transliteration (as per international rules) of Sanskrit/Hindi syllables and their pronounciations

Syllable		Sounds Like	Syllable		Sounds Like
अ	a	o in son	ट	ṭ	t in *t*en
आ	ā	a in m*a*ster	ठ	ṭh	th in an*t*- *h*ill
इ	i	i in *i*f	ड	ḍ	d in *d*en
ई	ī	ee in f*ee*l	ढ	ḍh	dh in go*dh*ood
उ	u	u in f*u*ll	ण	ṇ	n in u*n*der
ऊ	ū	oo in b*oo*t	त	t	french *t*
ऋ	ṛ	some what between r in ri	थ	th	th in *th*umb
			ध	dh	thh in wi*th*-*h*old
ऐ	ai	y in m*y*	न	n	n in *n*ot
ए	e	ay in m*ay*	प	p	p in *p*en
ओ	o	*oh*	फ	ph	ph in loo*p*-*h*ole
औ	au	ow in now	ब	b	b in *b*ag
क	k	k in *k*een	भ	bh	bh in a*bh*or
ख	kh	chh in bloc*kh*ead	म	m	m in *m*other
ग	g	g (hard) in *g*o	य	y	y in *y*ard
घ	gh	gh in *gh*ee	र	r	r in *r*un
ङ	ṅ	ng in si*ng*er	ल	l	l in *l*uck
च	c	ch in *ch*ain	व	v	v in a*v*ert
छ	ch	chh in cat*ch h*im	श	ś	sh
ज	j	j in *j*udge	ष	ṣ	sh in *sh*ow
झ	jh	dgech in he*dgeh*og	स	s	s in *s*un
ञ	ň	n (somewhat) as in fre*n*ch	ह	h	h in *h*ot
			म्	ṁ	m in su*m*

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Introduction

Procedures for Effective Ritual Worship

The *yajñas* and other modes of worship described in the *karma-kāṇḍa* section of Vedic Scriptures are not mere routine rituals. They are extraordinarily potent means of producing creative and occult energies of deeper and higher realms of subtle and invisible dimensions of conciousness. They are a culmination of long and deep research done by Indian *Rishis*. They provide an audio-visual structure to the human endeavour of realising the divine consciousness within themselves by the practice of the subtle *yoga-sādhanā*.

The unseen powers that lie hidden within us are awakened and given an organised direction by these rituals. Even medicinal qualities can be produced in ordinary substances by applying various ritualistic means to the procedures of making medicines. A very definite role is played by ritual worship in the awakening of illumined thoughts, positive inclinations and right values. Therefore ritual worship should not be ignored, nor should it be practised only as a means of getting cheap and easy worldly gains. It is dangerous both to look upon rituals as being the beginning and end all of worship as well as to treat them as meaningless. Their limitations must be properly understood without forgetting their inherent value. Ritual worship may be simplified and shortened but it's influence can only become powerful enough to achieve the desired goal if it is performed with a heart full of unflincting faith.

The invocation of gods through the medium of *yajñas*, the chanting of *mantras*, the purity of feelings, the decision, determination and discipline required for performing the *yajña*, all put together have such a tremendous power that they can generate a mass of blazing energy which can easily burn the impurities of our lower nature as well as transmute them into virtues.

It is only by applying this knowledge of ritual worship, perhaps in a bridged form towards the right direction, that a large

number of people can participate in the adventure of creating a new world order by performing *yajña* and offering oblation of their resolution and will to transcend and transform their lower tendencies, values and actions.

The senses are naturally drawn towards their respective sense-objects, the mind too is inclined to be drawn outward in search of its imagined ocean of happiness, the intellect is invaded by chadic thought waves from the outside. They are helpless and cannot have any worthwhile influence on the core of our subconscious where all desires and inclinations arise. *Yajña* and other such subtle and scientific rituals generate the power which can penetrate the depths of human personality and successfully transform it.

Those who are engaged in the task of ushering a new era in the history of humanity and are familiar with the successful experiments that have been done have seen for themselves how effectively the use of the scientific knowledge of *yajña* has positively transformed millions of people.

This extremely valuable project has to be undertaken with full commitment and alacrity. To comprehend it's deeper meaning and to convert it into effective action to help the human personality to evolve needs persistent endeavour.

The Role of the Organisers of The Karma-Kāṇḍa

The influence of ritual worship is not based on the volume of its procedures nor on elaborate details but is dependent on its vibrancy. The responsibility of making it alive and inspiring rests upon the organisers. If they are aware of their responsibilities from the very begining then there is no doubt that the desired beneficial results of the ritual will be achieved. In this context the following points should be kept in mind.

The procedure of the ritual should be divided into three parts:-

1. Good managment and conducive environment.
2. Keeping the stream of the ritual flowing.
3. Imparting of direction and steadfastness to the energy and en thusiasm produced by the ritual.

These three parts are known in the language of the *Śāstras* as *Prayāja, Yāja* and *Anuyāja*. They can be described as follows:-

Good Managment and Conducive Environment -*Prayāja*

1. All those who are connected with performing the ritual should be infused with enthusiasm and joy. To achieve it, the benefits of the ritual can be discussed with the participants. It is a proven fact that deeper influence can be produced if the ensuing benefits are discussed with the intellectuals and with those who promote faith and devotion through the emotions.
2. Together with the benefits of the ritual, the ease with which it can be performed should also be brought to the notice of the participants. Most people are not inclined to spend too much time, labour or money.
3. It is necessary to make the place of worship attractive and tastefully decorated.
4. All the requisite objects and substances to be used in the ritual should be kept ready in enough quantities at the right place otherwise the flow of the worship is disturbed and interrupted thereby reducing it's effect.
5. While getting together all the items neccessary for the ritual the atmosphere should be free from all kinds of anxieties, regrets, discontent or deprivation. The arrangments should be entrusted to a responsible person so that there are no last minute disclocations leading to ruffled tempers. If there are any noticeable errors or omissions then an immediate solution should be thought of or else the mistakes should be overlooked. The lack of any object or absence of any particular person or any mistake does not have such a negative effect on the purpose and influence of the ritual as an atmosphere surcharged with tension.

6. Before the ritual starts all the daily chores should be finished so that there are no disturbances to interrupt the flow of the worship. If there is a possibility of such a situation arising then a responsible person should be appointed in advance to take over and carry on the rituals smoothly.

Keeping the Stream of Worship Flowing –Yāja

It is possible to get the desired effect of the rituals according to the vision of the *Rishis* only if they are understood to be forms of worship instead of considering them to be mere lifeless drills. Both are important. It is necessary to chant the *mantras* in an attractive manner, give simple explanations and create a pleasing atmosphere; but to infuse them with life it is also necessary to have the ability to keep on consciously growing in confidence, committment and emotional richness.

1. Before starting the worship the atmosphere should be tranquil and the interest of the participants should be drawn towards the ritual. There may only be a few people actually performing the *yajña* but it becomes powerful only when the thoughts and feelings of all those who are present are synchronised. This should be explained briefly but with seriousness before the beginning of the proccedings.
2. The power of the *yajña* is generated when there is a proper combination of chanting of *mantras,* direction of thoughts, faith and actions.It is not enough to consider the chanting of *mantras* as the only important factor. The ability to guide the participants and instruct them to perform the *yājñic* actions in the correct way and give lucid explanations should also be improved.
3. The *mantras* become alive only when they are chanted reasonantly, clearly and with full concentration of mind so the participants should be familiar with the words to be able to chant them with ease and their attention is not occupied in reading them correctly.

4. There should be an attempt to maintain attentive interest of the participant by thought-provoking commentaries and emo-

tional explanations. They should not be so elaborate that the worship becomes like a classroom study period, nor should they be so brief that the meanings are lost and therefore unable to arouse interest.

5. The instructions for performing the ritual should be in accordance with the mental level and habits of the participants yet they should not be so superfluous that the ritual is not understood and performed correctly, nor should they become unnecessarily long and tedious. If one or two participants are not able to understand the instructions clearly then a volunteer should be posted near them to guide them to do the actions correctly. In this way there is no possibility of creating any disturbance or of anyone making mistakes.

6. The explanations and comments given should be of the intellectual and emotional standard of the participants. This skill should be consciously developed.

7. It is very important to keep a check on time. The time to be devoted in doing the ritual should be decided in advance according to the circumstances and convenience of the gathering and it should be announced beforehand. The proceedings, including the explanations and comments should be finished within the stipulated time schedule. It is possible to get the attention of the gathering and win its confidence by being careful about keeping time. These factors are very important in the success of the worship and in getting the desired results.

8. A balance should be maintained between the chanting of *mantras* and the commentaries that follow them. There should be no undue haste in chanting so that there is no difficulty in performing the corresponding ritual. The distribution of flowers and sacred ashes amongst the gathering and other such activities should be done while the comments are being given so that both end almost simultaneously. After the distribution is over, people should not have to wait for the comments to finish nor should there be a gap of time after the comments so that there is no scope for indulging in any idle talk.

Proper Planning for Sustaining of Energy and Enthusiasm - Anuyāja

The effect of rituals generates noble feelings and thoughts. At that time if they are given the correct direction then people gathered for the ritual can spontaneously receive their benefit. It is during high-tide that ship can cross the swollen ocean and it is only during high-tide that the treasures of the deep rise to the surface of the churning waters. Similarly in the human heart when there is a tide of enthusiasm, the highest resolutions of the mind can overcome the obstacles of in-born base inclinations that rise to the surface. The energy produced by enthusiastically and faithfully performing the ritual brings about a situation like this and its benefits can collectively benefit humanity as a whole.

The following are the kinds of effort which should be made for fulfilling this purpose:-

1. The completion of a *yajña* and other rituals should not be taken as the end of one's responsibilities. The completion of the ritual is merely the end of arousing noble aspirations. It is after this that the actual chapter of the worship begins when adequate measures are taken to convert aspiration into action.
2. Efforts should be made to engage every participant in easy but clearly demarcated activities according to his enthusiasm and capability. This is the best way to give offerings to the gods. The efficiency and simplicity with which people are involved in the ritual are the touch stone of the success of one who conducts the ritual.
3. To fulfill this purpose a team of workers can also be organised. It is not enough to involve a person in some activity but also to supervise its continuity. As time passes, resolutions tend to become weaker and the person starts faltering due to the pressure of circumstances. It is neccessary to exhort him to maintain his enthusiasm and resolve so that his feet are firmly rooted in the ground. This job can be done only by forging deep relationships together with having tremendous sense of duty.

Suggestions for Organising a Yajña

Those who are motivated to work for the creation of a new world-order consider *yajñas* to be of great importance as a means of the success of their project. However, they are themselves aware of, and are careful to prevent their colleagues from indulging in the immaturity of just feeding the fire with various stipulated substances in an attempt to gain spiritual benefits easily. This is not the purpose of a *yajña*. So, instead of making the physical aspects of the *yajña* of primary importance, much more concentration and effort should be directed toward making it vibrant and meaningful.

The old system of using many '*yajña-kuṇḍas*' for the sake of getting publicity has been abolished. Now *yajña* are performed only as an integral part of important religious functions where ancient traditions and the wisdom of sages is propogated or else on important social occassions such as birthdays and new year celebrations or in gatherings where social causes are promoted. The number of *'kuṇḍas'* used for such *yajña* has been limited to only nine so that there is no unnecessary pomp and show. To be able to reach the public, *yajña*-worship must necessarily be not only more alive and meaningful but also less expensive and easy to perform. To make this possible the following structure has been carefully enunciated and should be taken note of.

Purpose and Form of The *Yajña*

1. It is necessary to impose certain conditions on those who would be offering oblations in the *yajña* such as working knowledge of the *Gāyatrī*-worship. Other disciplines of worship should also be insisted upon by which the *yajña* will gather added power. Thus, there will be the practical advantage of automatically elaminating the possibility of a crowd of curious onlookers.

2. It is important to keep in mind the cleanliness and purity of the site of worship. The kind of clothes that are worn by the participants should also meet the requirments of the worship.

3. Frugality should be excersised in making the *'yajňaśālā'* or pandal attractive. There are many economically affordable ways of decorating that can be thought of and many inexpensive things which can be used for the purpose such as putting up framed pictures, using flags, banners etc.

4. It is essential to insure the purity of the wood and other materials to be used in the *yajňa.* All necessary items of worship and the *sāmagrī* or substances used for oblation can be purchased from the stores of *Shanti Kunj Ashram* or prepared at home if ingredients are easily available.

5. Devotion should be encouraged in the participants to offer their labour of love in preparing and decorating the pandal and in other activities. In this way there is not only a saving of expenses; but more importantly the atmosphere starts vibrating with the waves of pure devotion which can produce unusual effects. If enthusiasm can be aroused amongst the devotees then they can be given different assignments at different times and the preparations can be made in an atmosphere of religious fervour amid the singing of *bhajans* and *kirtans*. However no one should be pressurised to join. It should be an entirely voluntary effort by those who are emotionally involved and motivated by devotion.

6. Influential devotees can be requested to personally motivate others to join the *yajňa*.

7. It is best to give the participants in the *yajňa* a prior know-how of the basic procedures of the worship so that there is no unnecessary hitch during the *yajňa* and its flow is not disturbed.

8. Since pure *ghee* is not easily available these days only the seven stipulated oblations of the *'ājyāhuti'* at the beginning of the *yajňa* and at the end of the *'vasordhārā'* oblations are enough. This small amount of *ghee* can be easily procured or made at home.

Preparations for The Yajňa

All preparations for the *yajňa* starting from the cleaning of the site to the obtaining of all essential materials to be used in

the worship should be done well in advance. Other important rules are as follows:-

1. For every *yajña-kuṇḍa* one garland of flowers is required. According to calculations 7 kgs of wood is used for one *'kuṇḍa'*.

2. 50 grams of *ghee* are required for the *ājāhuti* and *vasordhārā* oblations in the beginning and end, together with the *ārati* etc.

3. About $2^1/_2$ kgs of '*sāmagrī*' or materials for offerings are required for 1000 oblations. The calculations are made in this manner:- *kuṅḍa* x number of people for each *kuṇḍa* x number of *mantra* to be chanted for offering oblations. For example, if there are 5 *kuṅḍas* and each *kuṇḍa* has 5 persons participating in it and oblations are offered at the chanting of 108 *mantras* then the total number of oblations will be 2700 - According to this calculation the amount of '*sāmagrī*' required can be ascertained.

4. All auspicious '*kalaśa*' to be installed at the *yajña maṅḍapa* should be painted and kept ready in advance.

5. Arrangements should be there to erect the *Sarvatobhadra* and *Tattva-Vedī* platforms. In a one day *yajña* it is not necessary to make them. It would be enough to make a dais and put a *'kalaśa'* on it.

6. A stall for the sale of relevant literature can be set up near the pandal for the propagation of religious knowledge. Those interested in starting the *Gāyatrī* worship should be able to get reading material on the subject easily. It would be still better if arrangements could be made to give a primary teaching on the subject to those interested.

7. Charts of various resolutions which could be taken as *Deva-dakṣiṇā* could be made and displayed in prominent places within the pandal and the circulars for the *Deva dakṣiṇā-saṅkalpa* should be printed in adequate numbers and kept ready to be given out.

8. The offering of coconuts in the *'Pūrṇāhuti'* should not be insisted upon. Whole betel-nuts *(supāri)* will serve the purpose.

9. After the *'Pūrṇāhuti'* small balls of sugar *(makhana)*, *Chironjidana* can be distributed as *prasāda* instead of expensive sweets.

10. It is a well known custom that feeding of unmarried girls serves as a good substitute for a *'Brāhmaṇa-bhoja'*.

11. If the representatives of other branches of the *Ashrama* have to be fed then the menu can be simple and *sātvik* like *kheer, khichari* etc. This not only reduces the cost of the food but also removes the misconceptions about certain foods and distortions of tradition which have crept in e. g. *kachchī* and *pakkā bhojana.*

12. Seperate seating arrangements should be made for men and women in the pandal.

13. For the smooth running of the entire function different jobs should be delegated to different people and special volunteers appointed to oversee them.

14. If donations in cash are collected on the spot then care should be taken to circulate the accounts as soon as possible. It is important to be alert about this.

Workers and Volunteers

1. *Yajña* are organised on the basis of collective cooperation and so no one person is given any special desigation or is considered more important than the others, although there is always one person who directs the proceedings and under whose guidance the expenses are shared by all. There is no one who can manipulate the status of a patron. It is unethical for any one to try and gain more importance than the others because all workers are of equal status in a *yajña*.

2. People of the community known to be efficient in managment should be requested to help in organising the function for its greater success. While the *yajña* is being performed, effort should be to inspire as many people as possible in the chanting of *mantras* and assisting in other small ways so that they in turn can gain experience to organise and conduct on their own such a *yajña*.

3. Whatever monetary offerings are received should be credited to the organisation fund and should not belong to the person who conducts the *yajña*. Minor expenses like expenses for travel etc or

any small honararium given to any particular worker should be met out of these collections. No person should either demand or accept any direct monetary compensation for conducting the proceedings.

4. The number of volunteers to be recruited, they should be decided in advance according to the needs of the occasion and they should be explained their respective duties so that the risk of any hitch in the worship is minimised. Also it is important to depute volunteers to help the participants in performing the *yajña* and offering oblations in the correct manner.

5. All volunteers should be given badges to be displayed prominently on their person. Yellow garments are usually worn on such religious occassions and it would be in keeping with the spirit of the *yajña* if all participants wore such clothes. To avoid inconvenience, they should be informed of this earlier. It would also be a good idea to keep some yellow *'dupattās'* in readiness so that they could be lent for use of those prominent people who come without their own.

6. At the completion of the *yajña* the *āratī* is offered to all those who are present and the ashes of the *yajña* fire are distributed to them. According to the size of the gathering one or more persons should be deputed to do this so that there is no unnecessary waste of time. The same rule applies to the sprinkling of the holy water after the *śāntipātha*. Men and women volunteers should serve the respective groups seperately.

Construction of the Maṅḍapa

1. The *maṅḍapa* should be put up with meticulous care and devotion, making it as attractive as possible. There are so many ways in which it can be decorated tastefully. Seasonal flowers, fruit and even vegetables and of course leaves that do not shrivel easily like those of the mango, *jamun* and *aśoka* trees can all be used in an artistic manner to make the *maṅḍapa* beautiful. It is a labour of love and if love and devotion are there then the result is bound to be perfect.

2. In big metro cities where Nature does not provide its bounty, coloured materials can be substituted for leaves and attractively designed awnings, buntings, frills can be made of cloth and used.

3. *'Alpana'* designs drawn by talented people on the ground and all around the podium can create an effect of celestial beauty. If artistic talents are not available then easier ways of doing *'Rangolī'* with mould filled with colours can be used as in Maharashtra and South India.

4. Not only the *'Maṇḍapa'* but the entire area of the *'Yajňaśālā'* or pandal should be tastefully decorated.

5. Coloured flags with the branch symbol embossed on them should fly from the top of tall bamboo poles all around the pandal.

6. The ground of the pandal should be levelled and cleaned or, better still, raised about six to nine inches, if possible.

7. The *yajňa-kuṇḍa* can be placed on the platform itself instead of digging a hole in the ground for it. Alternately, instead of a *'kuṇḍa'* a *'vedī'* made of mud and water can be made by raising it a few inches above the platform where the *yajňa* can be performed.

8. Every branch should have a wooden frame of appropriate size and shape for the making of a *kuṇḍa*. It is best to use the frame than make the *kuṇḍa* manually because it is easier, faster and can be made to correct specifications. Manually made *kuṇḍas* may vary in size from one to another, besides taking much longer time to make.

9. It is an absolute necessity to construct a bamboo barricade all around the pandal with a gate which can be properly closed so that the place is properly protected from dogs, cats and other intruders.

10. The platform for accomodating one *yajňa-kuṇḍa* should not be less than a square of 8' width and 8' length. It can even be increased by a foot or two according to the need. Four pillars are enough to support such a platform. Obviously the platform has to be much bigger if five or nine *kuṇḍas* are used and to support the

bigger platform twelve pillars on the outside and four in the centre are required. Usually the size of the platform for five *kuṅḍas* is 18'x18' square and 24'x24' for nine *kuṇḍas*. The height of the *maṅḍapa* should not be less than 15'.

11. There should be no spirit of crude competition amongst the branches and neither should there be a oslentatiousness in the construction of the *maṅḍapa*. If the gathering is expected to be large then five or nine *kuṇḍas* can be used otherwise one is quite sufficient. This is a measure of discipline to curb false pride and should be strictly followed.

12. Three Borders of three different colours should be made: the lowest Black, the middle Red and the top White. When the *vedī* is made the three Boundaries should be of equal hight and width. The centre can be 1 feet x 1 feet. In proportion to 1 feet., 2 inch of hieght and width for each Border is enough. Next to the lowest Border a drain - kind of ditch - should be dug for water.

Discipline for Participants

All those participating in a *yajña* should adhere to the following rules :-

1. The *'sāmagrī'* or material used for oblations should be held in an appropriate quantity by the middle and third fingers and with the help of the thumb should be offered into the fire.
2. Sit erect and cross-legged.
3. Oblations should be offered with a sense of reverence and not just thrown anyhow in the fire.
4. All should chant the *maṅtras* together and in the same tenor. The combined voices of all should sound as if it is only one voice. Such chanting automatically raises the spirit and the whole being starts pulsating with fervour.
5. When the word *'svāhā'* is uttered the offerings should be made by all at the same time simultaneously.
6. The back of the spoon used for offering *ghee* to the fire should

be constantly wiped on the side of the vessel containing the *ghee* so that it does not drop on the sheets below and stain them.

7. After each offering of *ghee* a drop should go into the *'praṇītā-pātra'* together with the words *idaṁ gāyatrai idaṁ na mama.*

8. It is desirable that the participants should wear yellow *dupattās* around their shoulders.

9. There should be no unnecessary chatting in the place of worship. *Yajňa* related messages can be conveyed in a few words or with signs only.

10. No one should enter the pandal without bathing or washing his feet.

11. Infants or very small children who cannot control the call of nature should be debassed from entering the pandal.

12. All participants should wear *dhoties. Panjabi* men women are an exception to this rule as they habitually wear *pyjamas / salwars.*

Protection from Fire

Some times it is likely that objects kept close to the *yajňa-kuṅḍa* may catch fire if sufficient care is not taken. If that happens, it is ignorantly considered to be very inauspicious and an indication of the wrath of Mother *Gāyatrī*. In reality it is only a punishment to the people concerned for their carelessness. Therefore it is very important for every worker, volunteer and participant to be fully alert and take appropriate precautions.

1. The roof of the pandal should be of appropriate height so that the flames of the *pūrṇāhuti* fed by materials like coconuts, cannot reach the top.

2. If the *pūrṇāhuti* fire becomes so strong and fierce then all objects kept in its proximity should be removed to safer distances. Only betelnuts or coconuts should be used as offerings in the *pūrṇāhuti* to prevent the flames from becoming a conflagration.

3. During *āratī* care should be taken to protect clothes from the wick flames.

4. Objects kept close to the *"Havana-Kuṅḍa"* can easily catch fire even after the *yajña* is over from the sparks flying from the embers. So the *yajña-kuṅḍa* should be suitably guarded till the fire is totally extinguished.

Articles Required for Performing a *Yajña*

1. **Metal vessels:-** 8 plates for *havana sāmagrī*, 1 big *katorā* for *ghee* which is to be offered as oblations ; 1 small *lotā*, 3 earthenware pots for water with covers ; a small cup for placing the *dīpaka* at time of *āratī* ; 9 *pancapātra,* 9 spoons, 1 brass *bālti* to keep *sāmagrī*, 1 vessel for *ghee*, 2 *thāli* for keeping miscellaneous *pūjā* articles, 1 incense burner, 1 *lotā* of water.
2. **Materials for** Āratī:- Conch, gong, musical instruments.
3. **Miscellaneous things:-** 1 coloured earthenware '*kalaśa*', 1 cloth ring on which the *kalaśa* can be placed, mango leaves to be put on the mouth of the *kalaśa* and a garland of flowers to be put around it.
4. **Wooden vessels:-** *Praṇitā, prokṣaṇi, sruvā, sṛci* and *sphya.* One hand-fan for every *kuṅḍa.*
5. **Seating arrangement:-** 9 *āsanas* for those performing the *yajña*. 1 *āsana* for the main conductor of the *yajña*. 1 stool, 1 glass-cover for the *dīpaka*, a small picture of *Trideva* (*Gāyatrī, Yajña-puruśa* and *Jñāna-jyoti*) to be framed in a glass and one yellow cloth to cover the stool.
6. ***Puja* articles:-** Rice, *rolī*, incense sticks, cotton wicks, match-box, camphor, sandalwood, plenty of flowers and petals, sweets for *dīpaka* (small sugar balls should do) auspicious thread to tie around the wrist, *peda*, coconuts, or betel-nuts for *pūrṇāhuti*, *dīpaka* made from *āṭā* for *āratī*, five or more wicks with *ghee*, cow's milk, curds, *ghee*, sugar, *tulasī*-leaves for *pancāmṛta*, *yajñopavita* according to the numbers present.

The above requirements are for one *kuṅḍa yajña*. The quantities will increase correspondingly for 5 or 9 *kuṅḍas*.

7. 5 stools of 5' or 7' square, cloth to cover them, 5 painted *kalaśa*, 5 coconuts wrapped in red cloth; yellow, red, green and black paint for painting the stools.

All articles will increase according to the number of *kuṅḍas* in the *yajňa*.

Articles to be Available at Major Branches of Gayatri Pariwar

1. All materials for erecting a *maṅḍapa* such as bamboos, *śāmiyāna*, frills, awnings, buntings etc.
2. Wooden frame of correct measurements for making a *havana-kuṇḍa*. This can facilitate the making of a *kuṇḍa* of standard size and shape.
3. 5 types of wood to be used as offerings in the *yajňa* (*samidhā*).
4. All vessels and articles required for the *yajňa* such as *pancapātras*, spoons, plates, big *thālis*, brass buckets etc.
5. Hand fans, hand towels, flower vases, conch shells, gong etc.
6. Harmonium, *tabalā* and other musical instruments.
7. At least one hundred booklets with instructions for participants in a *yajňa*.
8. Framed pictures, paper or cloth flags etc.
9. Incense sticks, *sāmagrī, samidhā* or cut or dried pieces of wood for using in the *havana*, sandalwood.
10. All other *pūjā* articles.

The above materials should always be available in all branches of the *ashram* so that organisers of a *yajňa* can easily avail of them whenever neccessary for occassions such as celebrations, auspicious events, religious functions etc. All cloth articles should be washed and kept ready after every use. These articles can also be given on loan or on hire to private parties who wish to perform a *havana*. They can be charged for any damages incurred.

The effort should be to use whatever financial savings are made on such occassions for the purpose of keeping the branch well-stocked. It has already been said that every branch propagating the new-era project should become a mini *Shanti-Kunj* in its own area, and be self-contained and independent. It is therfore, necessary for every branch to have stocks of all neccessary items for the *yajňa* worship.

A lending library can also be started by the branches. Other articles of use other than those required for the *yajña* which can enrich the branch are loud speakers, tape-recorders, video cassettes, video players, screen projectors etc. The greater the facilities available to the workers the greater will be their enthusiasm to forge ahead successfully with the noble task of creating an awareness for the need of establishing a new world order.

After becoming self-sufficient a branch should take up the task of constructing premises for itself which should accomodate an office, library, school hall, temple and study room. Two rooms can be made as lodgings for the workers. If the workers are enthusiastic and motivated enough to organise huge *yajñas* from time to time then the finances for the project can easily be met by the savings from these *yajñas*. *Yajñas* are performed not only as an invocation and worship of gods but also a very powerful means for the awakening of the masses and creating a social awareness in them. If this goal is kept in mind only then a *yajña* becomes truly meaningful and worthwhile. The allegations made by educated people of corruption, needless waste of money, nurturing and encouraging undesirable superstitions and other objections raised against the usual hackneyed way of performing *yajña* are quite justified. However the purpose of the *Vājapeya yajña* has always been the awakening of the masses. The *Gāyatrī yajña* can also be called an endeavour to rejuvenate and bring about a renaissance in the religion and culture of our country and its people - as such, the *Gāyatrī yajña* should also be included amongst the other *Vājapeya yajña*.

The Importance and Utility of the Gāyatrī Yajña

Have we ever stopped to think why we do a *'Havana'* or perform a *Yajña*? Either we do it mechanically, without thinking, or we do not do it at all. But why? What is the purpose

of a *yajña*? Does it help us in any way to achieve even a small measure of fulfillment and happiness? To get the answer to these questions we have to go back in time to antiquity and discover the great secrets hidden in the Vedic texts. The source of Indian Culture is the *Gāyatrī Mantra* - The pure stream of knowledge, and *Yajña* is said to be the father of Indian spiritual thought. *Gāyatrī* is the symbol of all positive thoughts while *yajña* is that of noble deeds. These two combined together generate a great upsurge of righteous values and thoughts in the mind and heart which leads to human soul growth and world peace. It is thus through this medium that the chances of the well being of every human being on Earth is substantially increased.

The word *yajña* has three meanings:-

1) Worship of Gods; 2) Charity; 3) Togetherness. One of the main purposes of the *yajña* to a group of religiously inclined people is to fulfill a useful purpose. In today's world the power of unity is of great importance. In olden times *Prajāpati* had led the defeated gods to victory by collecting together all their various powers and infusing Mother *Durgā* with the strength of this combined power. The problem of humanity today can also be solved by the strength of their unision. Those who believe only in their own self-centred individuality are considered weak and selfish. The actual benefit of the *Gayātri Yajña* can be attained only when performed for general welfare and with the involvment of as many individuals as possible.

While performing a *yajña* we offer all kinds of valuable objects, nutritious food and scented materials to the fire and water. They in their turn carry these objects into the atmosphere and disperse them in the entire surroundings making the whole environment auspicious. The purity of the environment gained through a *yajña* gives an opportunity to everyone to breathe pure air and enjoy good health. The sound of the chanting of the *Vedic Mantras* vibrates in the sky and has the power to uplift and purify our emo-

tional and mental state. In this way, those who perform *yajña* do a great service to humanity by spending only a little effort and money.

All progress whether individual or of society is based on qualities like sacrifice, philanthrophy, service etc. If a mother does not sacrifice a part of her physical self to create the body of a child, if she does not suffer the pangs of childbirth, does not feed the child by squeezing out her own blood, if she does not devote herself to its upbringing and if all this is not done selflessly, then it would be impossible for human beings to be born and to survive. A human birth is possible because of the feelings of sacrifice on the part of the mother; sacrifice is also the basis of the performing of all *yajñas*.

The scriptures have explained this truth by giving the example of *Prajāpati* who is supposed to have created in His own likeness through a *yajña* and had dained that both man and the *yajña* had to contribute to the growth of each other.

It is only because human beings have developed within themselves the idealistic *yājñic* feelings that they have been able to overpower the wild beasts and maintain their race or else they would not have been able to do so because of their physical weakness and frailty vis a vis the sub human species. Whatever progress they have made so far is only because of their altrustic feelings and the basis of msnkind's further progress will depend on the inculcation and nurturing of these feelings.

The behaviour pattern of Nature follows the spirit of *yajña*. The ocean is generous and gives its water to the clouds and the clouds in turn carry their precious load from one place to another and finally pour them down as rain. Rivers and streams emerge from the soil fed by this rain and they flow steadily to drench the Earth and quench the thirst of all beings. Trees and fruits give themselves up for the good of others and flowers bloom to give joy to all beholders. Whatever functions are performed by the sun, moon, stars, wind etc are not for themselves but for the welfare of

others only. Each part of the body is constantly working not for its own sake but for the well-being of the whole body. Wherever we turn our eyes we can see that the cosmos is run on the *yajña* spirit. If this spirit of self sacrifice is absent then all the beauty and harmony of creation will turn into chaos and destruction. *Rishis* have said that *yajña* is like the hub of the wheels of creation and if this hub breaks then it is impossible for the wheels to move and the chariot to go ahead.

Science of *Yajña*

Many powerful streams are hidden in the *yājñic mantras*. Just as the combination of right words with the right musical notes can create many harmonious tunes which influence people in various ways, similarly the chanting of *mantras* also produce particular kinds of sound waves which have far-reaching effects on Nature and the subtle aspects of creation as well as on the gross and subtle bodies of human beings.

The powerful essence of a *yajña* which becomes infused in the atmosphere can destroy many unhealthy germs which are floating around in the air. Performing a *yajña* is a much more potent way of dealing with them than the spraying of insecticides or taking preventive medicines and injections. *Yajña* is the only remedy for prevention of infections during epidemics. Medicines can be used only in a limited number of places by a limited number of people but the purified air rising from the *yajña* reaches far and wide and protects even those who do not make any effort to immunise themselves. *Yajña* protects not only the health of human beings but also that of the plant and animal world.

The heat generated by the fire of the *yajña* leaves a stamp of sanctity on the innermost core of a human being. The ground and the surroundings of the place where the *yajña* is performed bear the indelible effects of its sanctity and have a long-lasting influence on those who visit the place. In olden days the places where big *yajña* were performed were treated as places of pilgrim-

age. As a matter of fact even the homes in which *yajña* were performed were considered to be holy and those who visited these homes were blessed by noble feelings and thoughts. The power of *yajña* can especially inspire and enliven women, children and even embryos in the womb and *yājñic* surroundings have been known to infuse them with positive thoughts.

A personality distorted by evil thoughts, perverted values and wrong deeds can be transformed by *yajña* and therefore it has been called the destroyer of evil. It has also been called the bestower of heaven because a wise and noble character purified by the influence of *yajña* can enjoy heavenly bliss every moment of life.

By actively participating in the performance of a *yajña*, the thick layers of impurities which have collected on the surface of the soul are easily removed. As a result the light of consciousness is easily reflected through it and day by day the *Brāhmaṇic* qualities keep increasing within the human being so that the ultimate goal of union of the *ātman* with *Paramātman* becomes very easy. Just as the broken bits of steel are welded together by fire, in the same way *yajña* brings about the joining together of the *ātman* and *Paramātman*. This purity of spirit and perfection can be attained through *yajña* and so a third of one's life should be devoted to *yājñic* activities. It is necessary for the environment to be surcharged with *yājñic* vibrations so that there is a progressive diminishing of negative values and a corresponding increase of positive ones.

Yajñas performed with strict observance of rules are so powerful that they can easily remove mental disturbances and aberrations. *Yajña* can be used as a special treatment to cure mental diseases and negative emotional and mental propensities such as lust, anger, greed, attachments, pride, vanity, jealousy, hatred, cowardice, laziness, fears etc. can be overcome and any incurable physical diseases can also be cured by the performing of *yajña*.

There are also several material gains of *yajña*. The envi-

ronment which is constantly polluted by our body-wastes, the breath we exhale, industrial emissions etc is the cause of many illnesses. We should purify the air as much as we pollute it and this can be done only by *yajňa*. The need to protect the health of the community can thus be fulfilled.

The smoke arising from the *yajňa* goes up to the sky and fertilises the clouds. When these clouds burst and come down to Earth as rain. Then the natural fertilisers help in producing healthy grass, grain, fruit and vegetables which provide nourishment to human beings and other living creatures. The vibrations of chanting of the *mantras* empowered by the worship pervade the surrounding air and have a cleansing effect on the mind. Thus, together with thé physical, the mental health of people of that area improves.

Many special *yajňas* are performed following special rules for the fulfillment of certain particular desires. King *Dasaratha* performed the *'putreśṭi yajňa'* and was thereafter blessed by four illustrious sons. The *'pancāgni vidyā'* described in detail in the *Agni Purāṇa* and the *Upniśads* reveals the mystery of this *yajňa*. *Viśvāmitra* and other *Riśis* performed many special *yajňa* for the destruction of the demons. *Rāma* and *Lakṣmana* themselves had to accompany *Viśvāmitra* to protect the *yajňas* from being despoiled by the demons.

After the battle of *Lankā*, *Rāma* had performed ten *'Aśvamedha yajňa'* and at end of the *Mahābhārata* war, *Kṛaṣṇa* had instructed the *Pāňḍavas* to perform a *Mahāyajňa* to dispel the negative influences of grief and sorrow that had spread in the atmosphere. The only remedy for counteracting any increase of demoniac influences in the environment is to perform as many *yajňas* as possible. There is the same sort of negativity in the air today and a tremendous degree of selfishness has spread after the two world wars of this century. In this context it is all the more important to infuse new life into the *yajňa* worship today.

Inspirations of Yajña

Yajña worship has a well-known tradition of endowing increased material and mental happiness and since the auspicious powers of the gods are infused in it there is little wonder that one can glean many details from it for the education of the masses. Just as little children are taught how to count by giving them little coloured balls fixed on a frame, so also the scenario of the *yajña* worship is an example which shows people that life should be lived on the basis of *yājña* thoughts and feelings by involving in *yājñic* activities through willing service to others. Our efforts should always be to make our lives noble, pure, strong and radiant like a *yajña*. Just as we become peaceful, pure, cool and calm after bathing in holy waters of Mother *Gangā,* in the same way *yajña* worship teaches us how to become vibrant and selfless and to excel in whatever we do.

It has been said that performing a *yajña* is like rehearsing the art of living. We offer valuable sustenance, materials and objects as our oblation to the *yajña* fire - in the same way we should be able to offer the best of our qualities like intelligence, knowledge, wealth, wisdom for the good of entire humanity. He who follows this principle in life is instrumental in bestowing enormous benefits not only in society but also on himself. All sages and saints have followed this principle. Those who cannot step forward to make sacrifice, those who are not moved to do selfless service with generosity cannot claim to have achieved fulfillment and an abiding joy in life.

The *Rigveda* while explaining the importance of *yājña* inspirations has likened a *yajña* to a *'Purohita'*, a priest, because by following his teachings we can improve our status here in this life and in the life hereafter. The teachings are as follows:-

1. Just as the valuable objects which we offer as oblations in the *yajña* do not remain with us but get dispersed in the air so that their beneficial effects are useful to the society as a whole so

also should the talents given to us by God be used. Our intelligence, wealth, influence, position and other gifts with which we are blessed should be used more for the welfare of society and less for ourselves.

2. The fire of the *yajňa* recieves and transforms everything which is offered to it whether outwardly less valuable or more. It rejects nothing. We should also make a constant attempt to take within our fold all those who are backward, deprived and the less fortunate and help them to rise to our level.

3. The flame of a candle always moves upwards by an inbuilt force and however much we try it does not change its direction and come down. Whatever temptations, fears and anxieties we may have to face in life we should never allow our thoughts and actions to be prompted by them. Even when challenged by the gravest situation we should always look upwards like the flame of a candle.

4. As long as a fire is burning it does not give up its qualities of heat and light. We also should never allow the energy of actions and our religious fervour to waver from the righteous path as long as we live.

5. When smearing ourselves with the ashes of the *yājňic* fire we should remind ourselves that what remains at end of human life is a fistful of ashes only.

6. To be like the wind and give away some of the objects we possess for the sake of nourishing all sentient and nonsentient beings impartially and without any feeling of 'me' and 'mine', love and hate, and never letting them know or be aware that you are the benefactor is equal to the merit acquired by doing a big *'brahmabhoja'*. *Yajňa* is the best possible way of gaining maximum results with minimum expenditure.

7. *Yajňa* is a form of togetherness. Other forms of worship are such that they can be done by oneself without any help from others but *yajňa* worship is such that it requires the cooperation of many others. Big *yajňas* organised for occasions like *Holī* and other festivals are always general and by this means

a feeling of togetherness, unity and service are encouraged and inculcated.

8. *Yajňa* is the father of Indian culture and is the oldest way of *vedic* worship. All auspicious days and any ritualistic action performed is marked by performing a *yajňa*. It is a sign of great farsightedness to take recourse to *yajňa* worship to bring about a unison of one's religious and emotional feelings.

9. *Gāyatrī Mantra* is a symbol of purity of thoughts and *yajňa* is that of righteous deeds. The synthesis of *Gāyatrī Mantra* and *yajňa* has proved very effective in bringing about an upsurge of noble thoughts and feelings. The rules and conditions of doing a *Gāyatrī Yajňa* are easy, attractive and popular. The power and reach of the *Gāyatrī Mantra* to correct and reform all those bound within the confines of their own negativity are both surprising and incomparable.

10. To get together the people of a town, village or community for the purpose of worship, it is necessary to perform *Gāyatrī Yajňa* in various places. If done in the wrong way they can prove to be very expensive besides being a waste of energy but if done with discrimination they can be performed with very little expense in a very attractive and meaningful way.

11. In all *Hiňdu* rituals, religious functions, celebrations and auspicious occasions, *yajňa* is of prime importance. Most of the religious requirments of such occassions can easily be met if the conditions and procedures of performing a *yajňa* are properly understood.

12. *Yajňa* can also be performed in an independent and individual capacity for purification of the environment and for the awakening of inner consciousness. On auspicious occasions *yajňa* are of great importance.

Every follower of Hinduism should be familiar with the *yājňa* procedures which are now described in the following pages.

Preliminary Karma-Kāṇḍa

Any ritual we perform is a worship and it is important that before we start the worship the outer as well as the inner environment should be properly attuned to the occassion. It is the responsibility of the *Ācārya* to ensure that everybody is calm and peaceful and all participants are seated properly. The ritual starts with the following four prayers:-
1) *Vyāsapītha Namana*; 2) *Guru Vandanā*; 3) *Saraswatī Vandanā* and 4) *Vyāsa Vandanā.*

These prayers are said before the actual rituals begin and are meant for the *'Ācārya'* and not for the sponsor.

These prayers have been evolved by ancient *Riśis* after years of contemplation and contain a wealth of knowledge and wisdom. To make himself worthy of receiving this wisdom and to be able to carry on this ancient tradition, as well as to sanctify the place of worship, these prayers should be chanted by the *Ācārya*.

1. ***Vyāsapītha Namana*** - The *Ācārya* should bow with reverance to the seat from where he will conduct the proceedings of the *karma-kāṅḍa*. This is not just a seat but a symbol of wisdom and knowledge and represents a long lineage of supreme wisdom. To do justice to the seat the *Ācārya* invokes its blessings before taking his place on it.
2. ***Guru Vandanā*** - A *guru* is not limited to a particular embodied person only but is an integral part of that stream of Light which is synonymous with God Himself. Those who conduct examinations and give marks as well as those who teach are both called teachers. Similarily, there is one part of the supreme consciousness which designs the conditions and disciplines for righteous living and accordingly gives awards - this part is called God. The other part is that which teaches these disciplines and gives guidance to live and manifest the teachings in their lives. The latter is called the Guru.

When the *Ācārya* invokes the blessings of this representative of the Divine, he is expected to manifest in himself the disciplines taught by him so that divine thoughts and powers may work through him for the protection of the glorious tradition of the *Rishis*. The following prayers should be said with devotion before starting the proceedings:-

om brahmānandaṁ parama sukhadaṁ, kevalaṁ jñānamūrtiṁ,
dvandvātītaṁ gaganasadṛśaṁ, tattvamasyādilakṣyam I
ekaṁ nityaṁ vimalamacalaṁ, sarvadhīsākṣibhūtaṁ,
bhāvātītaṁ triguṇarahitaṁ, sadguruṁ taṁ namāmi II1II

gu.gī. 67

akhaṇḍānandabodhāya, śiṣyasantāpahāriṇe I
saccidānandarūpaya, tasmai śri gurave namaḥ II2II

3. ***Saraswatī Vandanā*** - Mother *Saraswatī* is the Goddess of speech. Without the use of words and speech a ritual cannot be performed. Also, if words are not uttered with feelings then they remain ineffectual and a mere repetition of *mantras*. The blessings of Mother *Saraswatī* should be sought with devotion so that the *mantras* pronounced may be powerful and effective vehicles to infuse vitality and fervour in the hearts.

lakṣmīrmedhā dharāpuṣṭiḥ gauri tuṣṭiḥ prabhā dhṛatiḥ I
etābhiḥ pāhi tanubhiḥ, aṣṭābhirmāṁ sarasvati II1II

sarasvatyai namo nityaṁ, bhadrakālyai namo namaḥ I
veda vedāntavedāṅga, vidyāsthānebhya eva ca II2II

mātastvadīyapadapaṅkaja-bhaktiyuktā,
ye tvāṁ bhajanti nikhilānaparānvihāya I
te nirjaratvamiha yānti kalevareṇa,
bhūvahnivāyugaganāmbuvinirmitena II3II

4. *Vyāsa Vandanā* - This prayer should be uttered with deep fervour and intensity. It is an appeal by the *Ācārya* to *Veda Vyāsa*, the symbol of knowledge, for his blessings to be able to fulfill the responsibility he has taken upon himself of conducting the ritual with full honesty and integrity and that his mind, intellect, speech, indeed, his whole being be filled with *Vyāsa's* spirit.

vyāsāya viṣṇurūpāya, vyāsarūpāya viṣṇave ǀ
namo vai bṛhmanidhaye, vāsiṣṭhāya namo namaḥ ǁ1ǁ
namo ' stu te vyāsa viśālabuddhe,
fullāravindāyatapatranetra ǀ
yena tvayā bhāratatailapūrṇaḥ,
prajvālito jňānamayaḥ pradīpaḥ ǁ2ǁ br. pu. 245.7.11

All the above prayers are meant for the *Ācārya*. The greater the intensity of faith with which they are chanted, the more is the possibility of the ritual worship becoming spitiually surcharged.

Sādhanādīpavitrikaraṇam

It is of great importance to purify all materials and objects and other means used for performing the ritual and infuse them with a sense of sanctity. The instruments used in performing a surgical operation are sterilized before use so that all seen and unseen disease-carrying germs are destroyed. Similarly all means of performing rituals should also be sanctified by the power of *mantras*. According to the circumstances, one or more volunteers should stand with *kalaśa* filled with water near the place of worship. Together with the chanting of *mantras* all materials to be used for the ritual should be properly sanctified by the offerings of fruits, flowers, leaves etc to them with the feeling that the power of the *mantra* may destroy the negative influences if any and they be surcharged with positive ones:-

om punāti te parisruta gvang soma gvang sūryasya duhitā ǀ
vāreṇa śaśvatā tanā ǀ - 19.4

om punantu mā devajanāḥ, punantu manasā dhiyaḥ |
punantu viśvā bhūtāni, jātavedaḥ punīhi mā | - 19.39
om yatte pavitramarciṣi, agne vitatamantarā |
brahma tena punātu mā | - 19.41
om pavamānaḥ so adya naḥ, pavitreṇa vicarṣaṇiḥ |
yaḥ potā sa punātu mā | - 19.42
om ubhābhyāṁ deva savitaḥ, pavitreṇa savena ca |
māṁ punīhi viśvataḥ || - 19.43

This procedure is worth observing on all occasions when *yajňas* are performed.

Routine Proceedure for the Conducting of a *Yajňa*

Maṅgalācaraṇam

Those who are the sponsors of the *yajňa* or other religious functions should be welcomed in a special manner by showering flowers and yellow rice together with the chanting of *mantras*. This is to bless them with security, prosperity and greater spiritual development. While blessing them there should also be an intense faith that it is they who are showering their grace and through this worship the awareness of divinity within them is constantly growing. The following mantra should be chanted when giving blessings:-

om bhadraṁ karṇebhiḥ śraṇuyāma devā
bhadraṁpaśyemākṣabhiryajatrāḥ |
sthirairangaistuṣṭuvā gvang sastanūbhiḥ
vyaśemahi deva hitaṁ yadāyuḥ || 25.21

Pavitrikaraṇam

To fulfill the purpose of the Divine, human beings have to manifest divinity themselves. The powers of the gods are attracted towards people whose mind and body are pure and whose behav-

ior and attitudes are noble. Therefore it is neccessary to be physically and mentally clean before starting a sacred ritual like a *yajňa*. All those present must be inspired by the certainity that the upsurge of the cleansing and protective waves of pure feelings within them and are in response to their fervent prayer to the subtle divine powers.

Take some water on your left palm and cover it with the right one. After the *mantra* has been chanted sprinkle this water on your head and all over yourself.

om apavitraḥ pavitro vā, sarvāvasthāṁ gato 'pi vā |
yaḥ smaretpuṇdarīkākṣaṁ, sa bāhyābhyantaraḥ śuciḥ ||
om punātu puṇḍarīkākṣaḥ, punātu puṇḍarīkākṣaḥ, punātu |

vā.pu. 33.6

Ācamanam

For a *yajňa* a unison of speech, mind and *anaḥkaraṇa* are essential. All these three are sanctified by giving them an imaginative bath with water infused with the power of *mantras*. This is done by performing the act of *ācamana* or sipping of water three times. It is also resolved that at the time of performing this present *yajňa* and on future occassions, all effort will be made to make these three instruments more and more powerful and effective. With the pronouncing of each *mantra* one *ācamana* is taken.

om amṛatopastaraṇamasi svāhā ||1||
om amṛatāpidhānamasi svāhā ||2||
om satyaṁ yaśaḥ śrīrmayi, śrīḥ śrayatāṁ svāhā ||3||

āśva.gṛ.sū. 1.24 mā.gṛ.sū. 1.9

Śikhāvaṅdanam

The *śikhā* or tuft of hair hanging at the back of the head is like a flag proclaiming the truth of the Hindu religion. The head has been compared to a fortress from where flies aloft the flag of Hinduism. The *śikhā* is also regarded to be a symbol of *Mother Gāyatrī*.

Since all thoughts arise in the head, the *śikhā vandana* is a prayer that nothing but noble thoughts should arise in the mind, and the sharpness of the intellect and the power and purity of feelings and thoughts should always keep on increasing so that we become more and more worthy of holding aloft this traditional flag.

Touch the base where the root of *śikhā* lies with moistened fingers of the right hand. While chanting the *mantra* tie up the *śikhā* in a tight knot. Those who happen not to have a *śikhā* (women and others) may just touch the spot with reverence.

om cidrūpiṇi mahāmaye, divyatejaḥ samanvite |
tiṣṭha devi śikhāmadhye tejovṛaddhiṁ kuruṣva me ||

saṁ. pra.

Prāṇāyāmaḥ

Sit with straight back, keep left hand bent, with palm outstretched. Place the elbow of the right hand on the palm of the left hand keeping the fingers close to each other. With the thumb of right hand close the right nostril and with the left nostril slowly inhale maximum air. This is called *Pūraka*. Hold the breath inside and with middle and third fingers of the right hand close the left nostril as well so that now both nostrils are closed. This is called *Aṁtaḥ kumbhaka*. Now remove the thumb and open the right nostril, slowly exhaling the breath. This is called *Recaka*. After full exhalation hold the breath out again and remain without breathing. This is called *Bāhya kumbhaka*. These four acts put together form one cycle of *prāṇāyāma*. If this process seems difficult to do, then keep both hands on your lap and perform the *Pūraka, Recaka, Aṁtaḥ kumbhaka* and *Bāhya kumbhaka* as described above.

The inhalation and exhalation of air must be accompanied with appropriate feelings and thoughts. When inhaling, the thought should be that all the highest and best life-giving forces are being taken in. While holding the breath inside, imagine that this life-giving force and the power of gods are entering every pore and pervading

the whole being. Just as the Earth soaks in water, in the same way the breath during *Recaka* with all its vital powers should be soaked in by the mind and body. While exhaling, think that all impurities within the mind and body are going out of the system together with the breath. When holdling the breath again after exhaling, the persistent thought should be that all impurities and disorders have been expelled and all doors have been shut so that they cannot regain entry.

In *prāṇāyāma* the *mantras* are pronounced by others while the participant only does the breathing according to the rules prescribed above.

om bhūḥ om bhuvaḥ om svaḥ om mahaḥ,
om janaḥ om tapaḥ om satyam
om tatsaviturvareṇyaṁ bhargo devasya dhīmahi
dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt |
om āpojyotīraso 'mṛtaṁ brahma bhūrbhuvaḥ svaḥ om |

tai.ā. 10.27

Nyāsaḥ

Put some water in the hollow of your left palm and touch it with all fingers of the right hand joined together. As and when the *mantras* are chanted these fingers should touch the water first and then that part of the body which is indicated in the *mantra*, first on the left and then on the right side. This done repeatedly and in serial order is called *Nyāsa*. The utility of this act is to fill each part of the body with feelings of purity and to awaken the divine consciousness in them. All rituals performed during the occasion should be done in this awakened state of consciousness.

Concentrate upon thinking that all the organs and senses are imbibing divine tendencies due to the influence of the *mantras*. If concentrated upon, the divine consciousness will be there and prevent negative influences to enter and correspondingly there will be an increase in positive thoughts.

om vāṅg me āsye 'stu (To the mouth)
om nasorme prāṇo 'stu (To both the nostrils)
om akṣṇorme cakṣurastu (To both the eyes)
om karṇayorme śrotramastu (To both the ears)
om bāhvorme balamastu (To both the arms)
om ūrvorme ojo 'stu (To both the thighs)
om ariṣṭānime 'ṅgāni, tanūstanvā me saha santu (On whole body)

pā. gṛ. su.

Pṛathvī Pūjanam

We should have a sense of deep gratitude towards Mother Earth who blesses us with food, water, clothing, knowledge and provides us with so many conveniences. We must have the same respect and love for her which we have for our own mothers. We should bow down to Mother Earth and worship her. We should never fail to find ways of repaying her debt. During this worship we should feel that being her children she is endowing us with her divine qualities and is encouraging us to imbibe the large-heartedness and all-embracing love which she herself has. We must believe while worshipping her that we are able to transcend the limitations of our surroundings and circumstances and are being blessed to have the qualities of patience and generosity.

Take some rice, flowers, and water in the palm of the right hand and keep the left palm below the right while chanting the *mantra*. After the chanting is over leave the flowers etc in a vessel.

om pṛathvi! tvayā dhṛatā lokā, devi! tvaṁ viṣṇunā dhṛatā |
tvaṁ ca dhāraya maṁ devi! pavitraṁ kuru cāsanam ||

saṁ. pra.

Saṅkalpa

Before performing any important ritual it is a traditional necessity to make a *saṅalpa* or a resolution and perform the ritual associated with it. The reason for this is to make our purpose of doing the *yajña* clear to ourselves, so that we remain committed to our aim. This resolution should also be announced loudly for others to hear as well because only bad deeds are done secretly. By doing a *saṅkalpa* the determination and confidence of the devotee increases and the negative influences of mental laziness are kept under check. When the declaration of the *saṅkalpa* is made through speech, goodwill and co-operation of others is also gained and our positive powers are led towards the right direction by the chanting of the *mantras*.

The '*gotra*' is also mentioned in the *saṅkalpa*. *Gotras* are handed down to us by the *Rishis* and by mentioning our own '*gotra*' we should feel that we are a part of that lineage and thus are bound to perform actions worthy of it. It is best to have the prior knowledge of the month, day and date before taking the *saṅkalpa mantra* because it is not unbecoming to ask such trivial questions during the ritual. A *saṅkalpa* can be taken before performing any ritual worship such as the *Gāyatrī-Yajña* etc and this particular worship before which the *saṅkalpa* is taken should be clearly mentioned. It is appropriate to say the *saṅkalpa* in Hindi and add the words '*karmasaṁpādanārthaṁ*' at the end. By doing so the *Sanskrit* rendering of the *saṅkalpa* becomes complete; otherwise, there are selected words for different *saṅkalpa* which can also be spoken at the end. It is not necessary to declare the *saṅkalpa* in weekly *yajñas* or in general public programmes.

om viṣṇurviṣṇurviṣṇuḥ śrimadbhagvato mahāpuruṣasya viṣṇorājñayā pravartamānasya, adya śribrahmaṇo dvitīye parārdhe śriśvetavārāhakalpe, vaivasvatamanvantare, bhūrloke, jambūdvīpe, bhāratavarṣe, bharatkhaṇḍe, āryāvarttaikadeśāntaragate, ...kṣetre, ...vikramābde,

.......saṁvatsare, māsānāṁ māsottamemāse ......māse .....pakṣse ....tithau ....vāsare .... gotrotpannaḥ .....nāmā'haṁ satpravṛattisaṁvardhanāya, duṣpravṛatti-unmūlanāya, lokakalyāṇāya, ātmakalyāṇāya, vātāvaraṇa-pariṣkārāya, ujjvalabhaviṣya kāmanāpūrtaye ca prabalapuruṣārthaṁ kariṣye, asmai prayojanāya ca kalaśādi-āvāhitadevatā-pūjanapūrvakaṁ ...... karmasaṁpādanārthaṁ saṅkalpaṁ kariṣye I

Changing of *Yajňopavīta*

The *yajňopavīta* or sacred thread is also called *Vratbaṅdha*. It is a sacred symbol which creates an awareness of the need of leading a pure and austere life with responsibility. From time to time during *yajňas* or other festival ritual worships this sacred thread which is worn next to the skin around the body, should be changed. It is not necessary to do so in weekly *yajňas*. It can be changed either at the time of the *saṅkalpa* or at the end, during *pūrṇāhuti*. During individual ritual worship performances, the *yajňopavīta* should be changed by the main participants and by the guardians of the children in the family. If they are not wearing one at all then at least for the sake of the worship they can be given one as a temporary means which, if they so wish can be worn permanently also.

In the changing of the *yajňopavīta*, the new one has to be sanctified first. The various gods are first invoked and their powers infused in the sacred thread before it can be worn by the devotee who chants the special *mantras* himself. With a different *mantra* the old thread is removed by taking it out from over the head. This old thread should either be buried in a clean, pure spot of land or placed in the waters of a stream.

Wearing New *Yajňopavīta*

The following *mantra* should be chanted while the new *yajňopavīta* is worn:-

om yajňopavītaṁ paramaṁ pavitraṁ,
prajāpateryatsahajaṁ purastāt |
āyuṣyamagrūyaṁ pratimuňca śubhraṁ,
yajňopavītaṁ balamastu tejaḥ ||

pā.gṛ.sū.2.2.11

Discarding of the old *Yajňopavīta*

The old *yajňopavīta* should be removed from the body by taking it over the head while chanting the following *mantra*:-

om etāvaddinaparyantaṁ, brahma tvaṁ dhāritaṁ mayā |
jīrṇatvātte parityāgo, gaccha sūtra yathā sukhaṁ ||

Caṅdanadhāraṇam

Sandalwood or *Candana* has a cooling effect and has the property of special fragrance. Its paste is applied on the forehead as a reminder of the constant need of keeping our minds and thoughts cool, calm and fragrant. The fragrance of our thoughts should give joy to others and contentment to ourselves.

While the *candana*-paste is applied on the foreheads of the participants, others who are present should feel that God who has bestowed the qualities of fragrance and quietude to the *Candana* may also bless them with the same qualities. With such a prayer the sandalwood paste should be applied together with the chanting of the following *mantra*:-

om candanasya mahatpuṇyaṁ, pavitraṁ pāpanāśanam |
āpadāṁ harate nityaṁ, lakṣmīstiṣṭhati sarvadā ||

Rakṣāsūtram

This indicates the tying of the auspicious thread by the representatives of the *Ācārya* on the wrist of the participants.

For men and unmarried girls the right wrist and for married women the left wrist is enjoined. The fist of the hand on which the thread is being tied should be closed and the other hand should be placed on the head. While this ritual is being done there should be a sense of discipline and a willingness to take on responsibilities.

om vratena dīkṣāmāpnoti, dīkṣayā "pnoti dakṣiṇāṁ |
dakṣiṇā śraddhāmāpnoti, śraddhayā satyamāpyate || -19.30

The *kalaśa* is kept on the dais where the *pūjā* is performed. It should be made of metal, filled with water, decorated with flowers, with the auspicious thread tied round the top and on it should be placed a lighted *dīpaka* with its wick facing upwards.

Worshiping the Kalaśa

The *kalaśa* is a symbol of the entire universe and of that *Virāta Brahman* who is the uncaused cause of all. It can also be taken to be a harbinger of creativity and peace. All the gods in their microcosmic and macrocosmic forms are present in this symbolic form of the universe. This exemplifies that all the gods are essentially one and are emanations of the same Power. Through the medium of the *kalaśa* we are made aware of all the gods in one place, at one time and in one symbol. The message which we get through this *kalaśa* is that we should imbibe within ourselves the coolness of water and the radiance of the lighted lamp so that we get the ability to live our lives with glory.

The *dīpaka* is considered to be a symbol of *yajña* and the *kalaśa* of Mother *Gāyatrī*. They are like the parents of the pure stream of Indian tradition, religion and so in every religious function the *kalaśa* must always be placed on the dais and worshipped. Any one person can act as a representative and do the actual worship of the *kalaśa* with chanting of *mantras* while the others may stand with reverence.

om tattvāyāmi brahmaṇā vandamānaḥ, tadāśāste yajamāno havirbhiḥ I *aheḍamāno varuṇeha bodhyurūśa gvang, samāna 'āyuḥ pramoṣīḥ* II
om manojūtirjuṣatāmājyasya, bṛahaspatiryajňamimaṁ tanotvariṣṭaṁ, yajňa gvang samimaṁ dadhātu I
viśvedevāsa 'iha mādayantāmo3mpratiṣṭha II
om varuṇāya namaḥ I
āvāhayāmi, sthāpayāmi, dhyāyāmi II -2.13

After this perform the *pūjā* of the *kalaśa* with water, rice, flowers, incense, perfume, lamp, *prasāda* etc:-

gandhākṣataṁ, puṣpāṇi, dhūpaṁ, dīpaṁ, naivedyaṁ samarpayāmi I
om kalaśastha devatābhyo namaḥ I

Subsequently worship the gods who have been subtly ensactred in the *kalaśa* with the following *mantras*.

Kalaśa Prārthanā

om kalaśasya mukhe viṣṇuḥ, kaṇṭhe rudraḥ samāśritaḥ I
mūle tvasya sthito brahmā, madhye mātṛagaṇāḥ smṛatāḥ II1II
kukṣau tu sāgarāḥ sarve, saptadvīpā vasundharā I
ṛagvedo 'tha yajurvedaḥ, sāmavedo hyatharvaṇaḥ II2II
aṅgaiśca sahitāḥ sarve, kalaśantu samāśritaḥ I
atra gāyatrī sāvitrī, śānti-puṣṭikarī sadā II3II
tvayi tiṣṭhanti bhūtāni, tvayi prāṇāḥ pratiṣṭhitāḥ I
śivaḥ svayaṁ tvamevāsi, viṣṇustvaṁ ca prajāpatiḥ II4II
ādityā vasavo rudrā, viśvedevāḥ sapaitṛakāḥ I
tvayi tiṣṭhanti sarve 'pi, yataḥ kāmafalapradāḥ II5II
tvatprasādādimaṁ yajňaṁ, kartumīhe jalodbhava I
sānnidhyaṁ kuru me deva! prassano bhava sarvadā II6II

Dīpa Pūjanam

Together with the *kalaśa* the lighted *dīpaka* should also be placed on the dais. This is worshipped as the symbol of the all-pervading Light of all Lights. Even scientists today agree that all matter has emanated from the light of consciousness. This great Effulgence is worshipped through the medium of the *dīpaka*.

om agnirjyotirjyotiragniḥ svāhā |
sūryo jyotirjyotiḥ sūryaḥ svāhā |
agnirvarcco jyotirvarccaḥ svāhā |
sūryo varcco jyotirvarccaḥ svāhā |
jyotiḥ sūryaḥ sūryo jyotiḥ svāhā | - 3.9

Invocation of Gods
(*Devāvāhanam*)

Strange and varied are the streams of that *Brahman,* the Primordial Power. The body is one such stream in which are devised many systems like the circulatory system, the digestive system, the nervous system etc. They are all independent of each other and yet they are all bound to each other. In the same way the balance of creation is preserved by the various streams of Divine Consciousness, the Supreme Power which are responsible for the maintenance of the various functions of nature. These different streams are represented by the power of different gods. During any auspicious event we pray that these powers may bless us and by God's grace our expectations are also fulfilled. Therefore it is customary to include the invocation of gods in every religious function and worship. Their blessings are sought so that their powers may augment the endeavours of the devotee and make the event successful and meaningful.

The actual *pūjā* may be performed by one person only but the blessings of the gods can be obtained by the combined devotion of all, therefore all those present should be requested to join. According to certain scriptural quotations like *bhāve hi vidyate*

devaḥ tasmād bhāvo hi kāraṇam it is only the devotion of all which can invoke the powers of gods so it is necessary not only to involve all those who are present but also inspire them with feelings of *bhakti*. Everyone should participate with reverance, faith and concentration. Before chanting every *mantra* the nature and significance of the corresponding power is explained and then the *āhuti* is offered so that the power of each god is properly etched in the mind of the participants before the *mantra* is chanted. In all big *yajñas* this procedure is followed energising the atmosphere and making it vibrant and sacred. If the function is small then the procedure for a small *havana* can be followed where the ritual can be carried on with the chanting of the *mantras* aloud without the explanations. After proper discrimination, the length of the time of worship should be decided depending on the circumstances.

The *mantra* with the significance of each god is as follows:-

Guru - That emanation of Divine Consciousness which is manifested for the guidance and help of the seeker:-

om gururbrahmā gururviṣṇuḥ, gurureva maheśvaraḥ I
gurureva parabrahma, tasmai śri gurave namaḥ II1II
akhanḍamaṇḍalākāraṁ, vyāptaṁ yena carācaram I
tatpadaṁ darśitaṁ yena, tasmai śri gurave namaḥ II2II

gu.gī. 43.45

mātṛavat lālayitrī ca, pitṛavat mārgadarśikā I
namo 'stu gurusattāyai, śraddhā-prajñāyutā ca yā II3II
om śri gurave namaḥ I āvāhayāmi, sthāpayāmi, dhyāyāmi I

Gāyatrī - Mother of the *Vedas* and the gods, Mother of all gods and all beings and of the cosmos. The basis of all true knowledge and noble thoughts, she who holds everything together, Mother, the Primordial Cause of Creation:-

om āyātu varade devi! tryakṣare brahmavādini I
gāyatricchandasāṁ mātaḥ, brahmayone namo 'stu te II4II

saṁ. pra.

om śri gāyatrai namaḥ āvāhayāmi, sthāpayāmi, dhyāyami I
tato namaskāraṁ karomi I
om stutā mayā varadā vedamātā,
pracodayantāṁ pāvamāni dvijānām I
āyuḥ prāṇaṁ prajāṁ paśuṁ
kīrtiṁ draviṇaṁ brahmavarcasam I
mahyaṁ datvā vrajata brahmalokam I

atharva 19.71.1

Gaṇeśa - Symbol of discriminating intellect. He who destroys all obstacles, first among gods to be worshipped:-

abhīpsitārthasidhyarthaṁ, pūjito yaḥ surāsuraiḥ I
sarvavighnaharastasmai, gaṇādhipataye namaḥ II5II

Gaurī - Power of Mother *Shakti*, symbol of faith, purity:-

sarvamaṅgalamāṅgalye, śive sarvārthasādhike I
śaraṇye tryambake gauri, nārāyaṇi! namo'stute II6II

Hari - The Compassionate Beloved of all, He who opens all the streams of goodness within us:-

śuklāmbaradharaṁ devaṁ, śaśivarṇaṁ caturbhujam I
prasannavadanaṁ dhyāyet, sarvavighnopaśāntaye II7II
sarvadā sarvakāryeṣu, nāsti teṣāmamaṅgalam I
yeṣāṁ hṛadistho bhagavān, maṅgalāyatano hariḥ II8II

Seven ***Devas*** - The combination of seven powers which maintain the balance of Planet Earth in which are located the seven *lokas* and the seven islands:-

vināyakaṁ guruṁ bhānuṁ, brahmaviṣṇumaheśvarān I
sarasvatīṁ praṇaumyādau, śantikāryārthasiddhaye II9II

Punḍarīkakṣa - The beloved of all devotees, detached as the lotus, bestower of pure thoughts, He who gives the ability to turn our sight inwards:-

maṅgalaṁ bhagavān viṣṇuḥ, maṅgalaṁ garuḍadhvajaḥ
maṅgalaṁ puṇḍarīkākṣo, maṅgalāyatano hariḥ ||10||

Brahma - The Creator, that aspect of the Divine who has the ability to put all the various parts of the universe together and organise them as one whole:-

tvaṁ vai caturmukho brahmā, satyalokapitāmahaḥ |
āgaccha maṇḍale cāsmin, mama sarvārthasiddhaye ||11||

Viṣṇu - The Preserver, *Iśvara,* who grants fulfillment to all beings:-

śāntākāraṁ bhujagaśayanaṁ, padmanābhaṁ sureśaṁ,
viśvādhāraṁ gaganasadṛaśaṁ, meghavarṇaṁ śubhāṅgaṁ |
lakṣmīkāntaṁ kamalanayanaṁ, yogibhirdhyānagamyaṁ,
vande viṣṇuṁ bhavabhayaharaṁ, sarvalokaikanātham ||12||

Śiva - Bestower of auspiciousness, source of all discipline and change:-

vande devamumāpatiṁ suraguruṁ, vande jagatkāraṇaṁ,
vande pannagabhūṣaṇaṁ mṛgadharaṁ, vande paśūnāmpatim|
vande sūryaśaśāṅkavahninayanaṁ, vandemukundapriyaṁ,
vande bhaktajanāśrayaṁ ca varadaṁ, vande śivaṁ śankaraṁ
||13||

Tryaṁbaka - That power which can take us beyond life and death and grant liberation:-

om tryambakaṁ yajāmahe, sugandhimpuṣṭivardhanam|
urvārukamiva bandhanān, mṛtyormukṣīya māmṛtāt ||14||

Durga - She, the great mother with the power of organising, of courage and co-operation:-

durge smṛatā harasi bhītimaśeṣajantoḥ,
svasthaiḥ smṛatā matimatīva śubhāṁ dadāsi |

dāridryaduḥkhabhayahāriṇi kā tvadanyā,
sarvopakārakaraṇāya sadārdracittā ||15||

Sarasvatī - Devi Mother who removes all ignorance and inertia, having the creative powers of the arts, sciences, crafts, etc.:-

śuklāṁ brahmavicārasāraparamāṁ, ādyāṁ jagadvyāpinīṁ,
vīṇāpustakadhāriṇīmabhayadāṁ, jādyāndhakārāpahām |
haste sfātikamālikāṁ vidadhatīṁ, padmāsane saṁsthitām
vande tāṁ parameśvarīṁ bhagavatiṁ,
buddhipradāṁśāradām ||16||

Lakṣmī - Mother who provides wealth, fame and resources:-

ārdrāṁ yaḥ kariṇīṁ yaṣṭiṁ, suvarṇāṁ hemamālinīm |
sūryāṁ hiraṇmayīṁ lakṣmīṁ, jātavedo ma'āvaha ||17||

Kāli - The great power which destroys all evil and inauspicious thoughts:-

kālikāṁ tu kalātitāṁ, kalyāṇahṛadayāṁ śivām |
kalyāṇajananīṁ nityam, kalyāṇīṁ pūjayāmyaham ||18||

Gangā - The Divine luminous stream with the power to destroy impurities and sins and keep them under control:-
viṣṇupādābjasambhūte, gaṅge tripathagāmini |
dharmadraveti vikhyāte, pāpaṁ me hara jāhnavi ||19||

Places of Pilgrimage - The spiritually charged places of worship which inspire good thoughts and plant the seeds of pure desires and help to develop them:-
puṣkarādīni tīrthāni, gaṅgādyāḥ saritastathā |
āgacchantu pavitrāṇi, pūjākāle sadāmama ||20||

Navagṛaha - The symbol of all those powers which can keep the balance of all sentient and insentient aspects of nature and hold them together:-

brahmāmurāristripurāntakāri,
bhānuḥ śaśibhūmisuto budhaśca ।
guruśca śukraḥ śanirāhuketavaḥ,
sarvegrahāḥ śāntikarā bhavantu ॥21॥

Śodaśmātrikā - The combination of sixteen auspicious powers found in space and outer space :-

gaurī padmā śaci medhā, sāvitrī vijayā jayā ।
devasenā svadhā svāhā, mātaro lokamātaraḥ ॥22॥
dhṛatiḥ puṣṭistathā tuṣṭiḥ, ātmanaḥ kuladevatā ।
gaṇeśenādhikā hyetā, vṛaddhau pūjyāśca ṣoḍaśa ॥23॥

Saptamātrikā - Seven great powers which protect like a mother whenever invoked during any auspicious event:-

kīrtirlakṣmīrdhṛatirmedhā, siddhiḥ prajñā sarasvati ।
māṅgalyeṣu prapūjyāśca, saptaitā divyamātaraḥ ॥24॥

Vāstudeva - The unseen power of consciousness inherent in every object:-

nāgapṛṣṭhasamārūḍhaṁ, śūlahastaṁ mahābalam ।
pātālanāyakaṁ devaṁ, vāstudevaṁ namāmyaham ॥25॥

Kṣetrapāla - Subtle power which can arouse divinity in various fields of activity:-

kṣetrapālānnamasyāmi, sarvāriṣṭanivārakān ।
asya yāgasya siddhyarthaṁ, pūjayārādhitān mayā ॥26॥

Sarvadeva Namaskāraḥ

After the gods have been worshipped, they should be offered obeisance. This is not only an expression of respect and faith in the power of the gods but also a means to turn our minds and thoughts towards divinity. Our thoughts are constantly attracted towards the oppossing influences of destructive forces and to make them ineffective and regain our divine tendencies is an effort which is to be constantly pursued. While prostrating ourselves before the

gods our thoughts should be turned towards paying respect and welcoming six particular pairs of gods and goddesses specially, and also towards all those divine values which encourage us to fulfill our social duties and those towards the human race. The six pairs of gods and goddesses are:-

1. *Gaṇeśa* and his spouse for giving us discriminative powers and helping us to fulfill all our undertakings.

2. *Lakṣmī* and *Nārāyaṇa* for bestowing prosperity and wealth.

3. *Maheśa* and *Umā* for giving us powers of management and organisation.

4. *Vāṇī* and *Hiraṇyagarbha* for granting us enlightened speech and emotions.

5. *Śaci* and *Purandara* for giving us enthusiasm and creativity.

6. The other gods and goddesses representing life and death who are called our father and mother.

Gratitude should be expressesed to these 6 pairs by offering prayers so that we can appreciate their greatness and experience a need for them in our lives.

People having godly virtues should also be remembered in prayers and they are as follows:-

7. Ancestral family deity or some great soul in the family.

8. Your chosen form of the Divine or *Iśṭa-devatā* through the worship of whom the goal of your life becomes easier to attain.

9. The village God or the subtle ruler and organiser of the village.

10. The God of a particular place - social worker or village head.

11. The *Vāstu* God - artist, architect, scientist.

12. Any particular person devoted to the service of the people or a philanthropist.

13. Ordinary *Brāhmaṇa* of ideal character having knowledge and wisdom.

14. Any place or person which inspires noble feelings like a place of pilgrimage or a great devotee.

15. The divine consciouosness pervading humanity in the form of Mother *Gāyatrī*.

All these above mentioned are manifestations of divinity. The prayer is as follows:-

om siddhi buddhisahitāya śrīmanmahāgaṇādhipataye namaḥ |
om lakṣmīnārāyaṇābhyāṁ namaḥ |
om umāmaheśvarābhyāṁ namaḥ |
om vāṇīhiraṇyagarbhābhyāṁ namaḥ |
om śacīpurandarābhyāṁ namaḥ |
om mātāpitṛacaraṇakamalebhyo namaḥ |
om kuladevatābhyo namaḥ |
om iṣṭadevatābhyo namaḥ |
om grāmadevatābhyo namaḥ |
om sthānadevatābhyo namaḥ |
om vāstudevatābhyo namaḥ |
om sarvebhyo devebhyo namaḥ |
om sarvebhyo brāhmaṇebhyo namaḥ |
om sarvebhyastīrthebhyo namaḥ |
om etatkarma-pradhāna, śrigāyatrīdevyai namaḥ |
om puṇyaṁ puṇyāhaṁ dīrghamāyurastu |

Ṣodaśopacarapūjanam

There are sixteen ways of worshipping and welcoming guests or gods according to Indian culture. This is done according to the importance and status of the guest. It is necessary to keep two things in mind.

a) There should be no indifference in ritually and reverently welcoming gods during a *pūjā* with the excuse that gods being gods are not in need of any objects.

b) Whatever we have should be offered with love and respect to the Gods, as we do when some honoured guest visits our home we should not become indifferent in doing our best and providing him with the necessary objects of comfort and then make

excuses for our indifferences such as that - 'He is too well off to need anything from us.'

The gods are certainly not greedy to get articles or objects which we offer in worship but it is the feeling and reverence with which these are offered that makes them happy and so we should always remember that we are in no way doing them any favour by our valuable offerings. Rather, it is our faith and surrender which the gods accept and give us manifold blessings in return. The intensity of faith can always compensate for whatever material objects we cannot afford to give.

The worship is conducted by one representative person while others can add depth and meaning by the depth of feelings.

A volunteer should be appointed to oversee that there is no hitch in the proceedings. Care should be taken after one *mantra* that there is enough pause to make the offering before the next *mantra* is chanted.

om sarvebhyo devebhyo namaḥ I *āvāhayāmi, sthāpayāmi* II1II
āsanaṁ samarpayāmi II2II *pādyaṁ samarpayāmi* II3II
arghyaṁ samarpayāmi II4II *ācamanaṁ samarpayāmi* II5II
snānaṁ samarpayāmi II6II *vastraṁ samarpayāmi* II7II
yajňopavītaṁ samarpayāmi II8II *gandhaṁ vilepayāmi* II9II
dhūpaṁ āghrāpayāmi II10II *dīpaṁ darshayāmi* II11II
akṣatān samarpayāmi II12II *puṣpāṇi samarpayāmi* II13II
naivedyaṁ nivedayāmi II14II
tāmbulapūgifalāni samarpayāmi II15II
dakṣināṁ samarpayāmi II16II
II*sarvābhāve akṣatān samarpayāmi* II
Tato namaskaraṁ karomi |
om namo stvanantāya sahasramūrtaye,
sahasrapādākṣiṣirorubāhave, sahasranamne purūṣāya
śāśvate, sahasrakoṭīyugadhāriṇe namaḥ ||

Svastivācanam

The *svasti mantras* are endowed with the essence of prosperity and well being and they are means of declaring our aspiration for divine blessings. Declarations are made in the gross world by means of speech, and through the medium of *mantras* our emotions and devotional feelings are carried to the subtle world. While chanting these *mantras* we should pray that having been assured of our honesty of feelings, the gods would, according to their grace, create the right mental environment for us to live in. A suitable environment can be created in two ways:-
1) By guarding against baneful influences and
2) By joining for the creation and growth of beneficial influences.
While the *svastivācana* is chanted this invocation for creating a suitable atmosphere is made to the gods.

All those present should take some flowers, rice and water in their right palm, placing the left palm under it and keep it while the *mantras* are chanted. Then all the flowers etc should be collected and put away in a plate.

om gaṇānāṁ tvā gaṇapati gvang havāmahe,
priyāṇaṁ tvā priyapati gvang havāmahe,
nidhīnāṁ tvā nidhipati gvang havāmahe, vasomama |
āhamajāni garbhadhamā tvamajāsi garbhadham || 23.19
om svasti na 'indro vṛaddhaśravāḥ,
svasti naḥ pūṣā viśvavedāḥ |
svasti nastārkṣyo 'ariṣṭanemiḥ
svasti no bṛahaspatirdadhātu || 25.19
om payaḥ pṛathivyāṁ paya 'oṣadhīṣu
payo divyantarikṣe payodhāḥ |
payasvatīḥ pradiśaḥ santu mahyam || 18.36
om viṣṇo rarātamasi viṣṇoḥ, śnaptre stho viṣṇoḥ,
syūrasi viṣṇordhruvo 'si, vaiṣṇavamasi viṣṇave tvā || 5.21
om agnirdevatā vāto devatā, sūryo devatā candramā devatā,

vasavo devatā rudrā devatā, ādityā devatā,
maruto devatā, varuṇo devatā ‖ 14.20
om dyauḥ śāntirantarikṣa gvang śāntiḥ
pṛathvi śāntirāpaḥ śāntiroṣadhayaḥ śāntiḥ ।
vanaspatayaḥ śāntirviśvedevāḥ
śāntirbrahma śāntiḥ, sarva gvang śāntiḥ
śāntireva śāntiḥ, sā mā śāntiredhi ‖ 36.17
om viśvāni deva savitarduritāni parāsuva ।
yadbhadraṁ tanna ā suva । *om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ* ‖
sarvāriṣṭasuśāntirbhavatu ‖ 30.3

Rakṣā Vidhānam

It is very necessary to follow this procedure whenever an auspicious event is organised for the sake of our own protection from the evil influences of the wicked beings and forces and beings of the visible and invisible realms, and be prepared to battle with them if the need arises. Usually the wicked attack only the good people not because they are lacking in nobility or divinity but because these good people consider everyone else to be as good as themselves and as such are caught unaware to face the challenge. Swayed by the ideals of generosity and forgiveness they lose all their courage and bravery and become weak instead of strong and good individuals. Under such circumstances the evil influences easily take advantage of them. By performing *yajňas* and other rituals the atmosphere is so charged with positive energy that no wicked influence can have any effect.

Many wicked people hatch plots to make these *yajňas* unsuccessful and all relilgiously inclined persons should be aware of this fact and so together with their noble ideals they should also gather enough individual and collective strength and resources to defeat the enemy. This awareness and alertness and the readiness to stand up against evil and protect oneself is called *Rakṣā Vidhānam.* The obstructive influences can come from all ten quarters and it is essential to keep a watch on them and in readiness to

counteract, the *mantra* is chanted and energised rice is scattered in all directions. An appeal to God for getting the power to fight these adverse influences is also incorporated in this act. Keep some rice in the left hand and scatter it in one direction indicated by the *mantra*:-

om pūrve rakṣatu vārāhaḥ, āgneyyāṁ garuḍadhvajaḥ I
dakṣiṇe padmanābhastu, nairṛtyāṁ madhusūdanaḥ II1II
paścime chaiva govindo, vāyavyāṁ tu janārdanaḥ I
uttare śripatī rakṣet, aiśānyāṁ hi maheśvaraḥ II2II
ūrdhvaṁ rakṣatu dhātā vo, hyadho 'nantaśca rakṣatu I
anuktamapi yat sthānaṁ, rakṣatviśo mamādridhṛak II3II
apasarpantu te bhūtā, ye bhūtā bhūmisaṁsthitāḥ I
ye bhūtā vighnakartāraḥ, te gacchantu śivājňayā II4II
apakrāmantu bhūtāni, piśācāḥ sarvato diśam I
sarveṣāmavirodhena, yajňakarma samārabhe II5II

Agnisthāpanam

The *yajňa*-fire is considered to represent *Brahma* and with this belief, the fire is placed on the dais and life is infused in it through the medium of *maṅtras* and with the same feelings the act of igniting the fire is accomplished. When the first spark of fire is seen in the *yajňa-kuṅḍa* then everyone should bow reverentially to it.

Before lighting the fire, the pieces of wood should be put deftly in the *kuṅḍa* so that there is no difficulty for the fire to start. To ignite the fire some small dry thin pieces of wood should be placed at the bottom of the *kuṅḍa* together with some camphor or a thick wick soaked in *ghee*, so that the fire can start easily.

om bhūrbhuvaḥ svardyauriva bhūmnā, pṛathiviva varimṇā I
tasyāste pṛathivi devayajani,
pṛaṣṭhe 'gnimannādamannādyāyādadhe I
agnim dūtaṁ purodadhe, havyavāhamupabruve I

devāṁ 'āsādayādiha | 3.5, 22.17
om agnaye namaḥ | *āvāhayāmi, sthāpayāmi, dhyāyāmi* |
gandhākṣataṁ, puṣpāṇi, dhūpaṁ, dīpaṁ, naivedyaṁ
samarpayāmi |

Gāyatrī Stavanam

In this prayer, the Sun God, the propagator of the *Gāyatrī* is worshipped. *Gāyatrī* worship can also be called the worship of fire. All those present should sit with folded hands with appropriate feelings of reverence and they should become totally immersed in the worship and have the unique experience of purity and divinity slowly pervading their whole being.

The following is implied by the coir repeated at the end of every stanza (hymn) – 'May the God *Savitā*, worthy of being worshipped make us pure', and let us feel the exhilaration and brilliance of experiencing divinity within us.

yanmaṇḍalaṁ dīptikaraṁ viśālam,
ratnaprabhaṁ tīvramanādirūpam |
dāridrya-duḥkhakṣayakāraṇaṁ ca,
punātu māṁ tatsaviturvareṇyam ||1||
yanmaṇḍalaṁ devagaṇaiḥ supūjitam,
vipraiḥstutaṁ mānavamuktikovidam |
taṁ devadevaṁ praṇamāmi bhargaṁ
punātu māṁ tatsaviturvareṇyam ||2||
yanmaṇḍalaṁ jñānaghanaṁ tvagamyaṁ
trailokyapūjyaṁ triguṇātmarūpam |
samasta-tejomaya-divyarūpaṁ,
punātu māṁ tatsaviturvareṇyam ||3||
yanmaṇḍalaṁ gūḍhamatiprabodhaṁ,
dharmasya vṛaddhim kurute janānām |
yat sarvapāpakṣayakāraṇaṁ ca,
punātu māṁ tatsaviturvareṇyam ||4||
yanmaṇḍalaṁ vyādhivināśadakṣaṁ,
yadṛg-yajuḥ-sāmasu sampragītam |

prakāśitaṁ yena ca bhūrbhuvaḥ svaḥ,
punātu māṁ tatsaviturvareṇyam ||5||

yanmaṇḍalaṁ vedavido vadanti,
gāyanti yaccāraṇa-siddhasaṅghāḥ |
yadyogino yogajuṣāṁ ca sanghāḥ,
punātu māṁ tatsaviturvareṇyam ||6||

yanmaṇḍalaṁ sarvajaneṣu pūjitaṁ,
jyotiśca kuryādiḥ martyaloke |
yatkāla-kālādimanādirūpaṁ,
punātu māṁ tatsaviturvareṇyam ||7||

yanmaṇḍalaṁ viṣṇucaturmukhāsyaṁ,
yadakṣaraṁ pāpaharaṁ janānām |
yatkālakalpakṣayakāraṇaṁ ca,
punātu māṁ tatsaviturvareṇyam ||8||

yanmaṇḍalaṁ viśvasṛjāṁ prasiddhaṁ,
utpatti-rakṣā-pralayapragalbham |
yasmin jagatsaṁharate'khilaṁ ca,
punātu māṁ tatsaviturvareṇyam ||9||

yanmaṇḍalaṁ sarvagatasya viṣṇoḥ,
ātmā paraṁdhāma-viśuddhatattvam |
sūkṣmāntarairyogapathānugamyaṁ
punātu māṁ tatsaviturvareṇyam ||10||

yanmaṇḍalaṁ brahmavido vadanti,
gāyanti yaccāraṇa-siddhasaṅghāḥ |
yanmaṇḍalaṁ vedavidaḥ smaranti,
punātu māṁ tatsaviturvareṇyam ||11||

yanmaṇḍalaṁ veda-vidopagītaṁ,
yadyogināṁ yogapathānugamyam |
tatsarvavedaṁ praṇamāmi divyaṁ,
punātu māṁ tatsaviturvareṇyam ||12||

Agni Pradīptanam

The *āhuti* or offerings are given in a well-lit fire and not in a smoky or half-lit fire. The fire can be well ignited if fanned properly. Our lives should be luminous, effulgent, radiant like blazing fire - it should be richly qualitative rather than long in mere years.

An ineffective smoky fire may live on for a long time but a moment of blazing glory is definitely more meaningful. The lighting of the *yajňa* fire symbolises the awakening of the potential powers within us.

om udbudhyasvāgne prati jāgṛahi,
tvamiṣṭā pūrte sa gvang sṛajethāmayaṁ ca |
asmintsadhaste adhyuttarasmin,
viśvedevā yajamānaśca sīdata || 15.54, 18.61

Samidhādhānam

When the God of the *yajňa* appears in the *kuṅḍa* in the form of fire then four small pieces of wood soaked in *ghee* should be offered to the fire one by one, each after the recitation of a *maṅtra*. These four pieces of wood are offered to remind ourselves of the four divisions of life, keeping fire as the witness. These four life-cycles or divisions of life which we should follow are *1) Brahmacarya 2) Gṛhastha 3) Vānaprastha 4) Saṅyāsa*

1. *Brahmacarya* - When a life of study and self-control is pursued.

2. *Gṛhastha* - Live a life-style which can give us *dharma* (scriptural rules), *artha* (wealth), *kāma* (pro-creation), *mokṣa* (liberation).

3. *Vānaprastha* - Taking to single-pointed *sādhanā* (worship), *svādhyāya* (study), *saṅyam* (discipline) and *sevā* (service).

4. *Saṅyāsa* - A tremendous effort to gain the four great treasures of physical strength, mental strength, spiritual strength and divine strength. These four accomplishments should be used for the

welfare of others like a *yagnya* and these concepts of life are etched on the memory by offering the four pieces of wood. To be inspired to make our personality affectionate, pliable, simple, and soft, these pieces of wood are soaked in *ghee*, and the prayer that goes with it is that just as the *ghee*-soaked wood can ignite the fire so also may the strength of our efforts and the power of God's grace combine together and help us to gain these accomplishments. The *samidhā* or wood is placed by the person who sits in the centre and gives the oblations of *ghee*. The seven other offerings of *ghee* for *jalaprasecana* and *ājyāhuti* are also given by him.

1. *om ayanta idhma ātmā, jātavedastenedhyasva vardhasva* |
ceddha vardhaya cāsmān prajayā, paśubhirbrahmavarcasena,
annādyena samedhaya svāhā |
idaṁ agnaye jātavedase idaṁ na mama || āśva.gṛ.sū. 1.10
2. *om samidhā'gniṁ duvasyata, ghṛatairbhodhayatātithim* |
āsmin havyā juhotana svāhā | *idaṁ agnaye idaṁ na mama* ||
3. *om susamiddhāya śociṣe, ghṛataṁ tīvraṁ juhotana* |
agnaye jātavedase svāhā |
idaṁ agnaye jātavedase idaṁ na mama ||
4. *om taṁ tvā samidbhiraṅgiro, ghṛatena vardhayāmasi* |
bṛahacchocā yaviṣṭhya svāhā |
idaṁ agnaye aṅgirase idaṁ na mama || 3.1-3

Jalaprasecanam

The combination of fire and water constitutes a pair. *Yajña* is said to be fire and *Gāyatrī* the water. They may also be said to denote knowledge and action or they can be classified as:-
1) luminosity - sweetness, 2) endeavour - contentment,
3) caring - sacrifice and 4) valour - peace.

Taking some water in a spoon, sprinkle it on all four sides of the *vedi* or dais with the recitation of *maṅtras* imagining that a boundary of coolness has been created around the fire which will lead to peace.
om adite'numanyasva || (*iti pūrve*)

om anumate 'numanyasva || *(iti paścime)*
om sarasvatyanumanyasva || *(iti uttare)* go.gṛ.sū.1.3. 1-3
om deva savitaḥ prasuva yajňaṁ, prasuva yajňapatiṁ bhagāya | *divyo gandharvaḥ ketapūḥ, ketaṁ naḥ punātu vācaspatirvācaṁ naḥ svadatu* || *(iti caturdikṣu)* 11.7

Ājyāhutiḥ

At the beginning of the *yajňa,* 7 offerings of *ghee* are given to the fire together with the chanting of seven *mantras.* No *'sāmagrī'* is offered with these seven *mantras*. These seven are called the *'ājyāhuti'* offerings. The *ghee* should be liquified beforehand to facilitate its use and after every oblation the back of the spoon with which the *ghee* is offered should be wiped against the vessel of *ghee* so that no drops fall to the ground and make it messy. The offering should be made only when the word *'svāhā'* is pronounced. After the offering when returning the spoon to its place, a drop of *ghee* remaining in the spoon should be put in a vessel of water placed near that of the *ghee*. This vessel is called the '*praṇītā pātra*'.

Ghee is symbolic of the quality of love. Qualities like compassion, service, kindness, generosity, friendship, affection are manifestations of this love. When *sādhanā* or worship is done selflessly with high ideals then it becomes divine love. This divine love infused in the *yajňa* activities becomes a source of joy to the gods and this is what we are made aware of in the offerings of the *ājyāhuti*.

There are only seven *devatās* who are wothy of receiving true love. They are like seven rays of the Sun creatively representing God or they can be called the seven horses of *Brahma-Aditya*. They are *Prajāpati* or *Parameśwara; Indra* or *Ātman;* Fire or wealth; Moon or peace; Earth or body; *Bhuvaḥ* or mind; *Svaḥ* or inner equipments *(antaḥkaraṇa).* These seven gods should be worshipped with great devotion and the effort should always be to imbibe their qualities within us. This is the significance of giving these seven offerings called *ājyāhuti.*

1. *om prajāpataye svāhā* |
idaṁ prajāpataye idaṁ na mama || 18.28
2. *om indrāya svāhā* |
idaṁ indrāya idaṁ na mama ||
3. *om agnaye svāhā* |
idaṁ agnaye idaṁ na mama ||
4. *om somāya svāhā* |
idaṁ somāya idaṁ na mama || 22.27
5. *om bhūḥ svāhā* |
idaṁ agnaye idaṁ na mama ||
6. *om bhuvaḥ svāhā* |
idaṁ vāyave idaṁ na mama ||
7. *om svaḥ svāhā* |
idaṁ sūryāya idaṁ na mama || go.gr̥.sū. 1.8.15

Gāyatrī Maṅtrāhutiḥ

Before the *yajňa* starts all necessary articles required such as *sāmagrī, samidhā* (wood), *ghee* etc. should be procured in sufficient quantities according to the number of *Gāyatrī maṅtrāhutis* you have to decided to offer. The *sāmagrī* should be held with the middle and third fingers of the right hand with the palm facing upwards and it should be offered into the fire with the help of the thumb. The offering should be made only when the word *'svāhā'* is said and the hand should be outstretched so that the *sāmagrī* goes straight into the fire and does not get scattered outside. All participants should recite the *mantras* together and offerings should also be made by all at the same time.

The words '*idaṁ gāyatrai idaṁ na mama*' are pronounced after the oblation is made meaning that the *yajňa* is performed and offerings made not for fulfilling one's own selfish desires but for the collective wellbeing. Just as we serve food with care and love to our honoured guests, in the same way our offerings should be made with devotion and faith. It is for the welfare of society that this labour of love, sacrifice and austerities is being observed and

this should always be kept in mind. Just as wood takes on the form and qualities of fire when touched by it, so also should our entire lives be transformed by the *yajña*. These are the thoughts with which the *āhutis* are offered. There should be 24 offerings made along with the chanting of the *Gāyatrī mantra.* However, the number can be increased or decreased according to availability of time.

om bhūrbhuvaḥ svaḥ tatsaviturvareṇyaṁ, bhargo devasya
dhīmahi | *dhiyo yo naḥ pracodayāt svāhā* |
idaṁ gāyatryai idaṁ na mama | 36.3

Sviṣṭakṛathomaḥ

This can also be called an offering of penance. To conteract whatever errors may have crept in while performing the *yajña* this act of offering is done. In this act some sweetmeat is offered. This indicates a soft and sweet personality. Sweetness in speech, sweetness in behaviour, sweet thoughts and an ever smiling nature are symbolised by the sweetmeat offered to the gods. When serving the gods our thoughts, attitudes, behaviour should always be gentle and pleasing - this is the message of the *sviṣṭakrat homa.*

om yadasya karmaṇo 'tyarīricaṁ, yadvānyūnamihākaram
lagniṣṭat sviṣṭakṛd vidyātsarvaṁ sviṣṭaṁ suhutaṁ karotu me |
agnaye sviṣṭakṛte suhutahute, sarvaprāyaścittāhutināṁ
kāmānāṁ, samarddhayitre sarvānnaḥ kāmāntsamarddhaya
svāhā | *idaṁ agnaye sviṣṭakṛte idaṁ na mama* ||

Devadakṣiṇā - Pūrṇāhuti

The importance of a human being is that he has the capacity to aspire for higher ideals and can fulfill them. Therefore he should always aim at progressive spiritual fulfilment. Those who are interested in *yājñic* principles should take a vow before the fire that they will constantly endeavour to go towards this goal. It is expected of

human beings that they should stay away from animal tendencies and always aspire to go towards divinity. This divinity can be reached by performing *yajňas*. The energy and blessings obtained by doing a *yajňa* should be utilised for eliminating our lower propensities and for this it is necessasry to make a firm resolution to give up negative attitudes and tendencies and adopt noble ideals. The power of gods is especially benign towards those who make such a resolution. At the time of doing the *'pūrṇāhuti'*, this resolution should be declared boldly for all to hear and with the prayer that the gods may bless them and help them in their endeavour. The vices to be given up and virtues to be adopted can be declared according to time and circumstances.

Taking a bit of *'sāmagrī'* in the hand, everyone should stand up and with the utterance of the word *'svāhā'* should offer it to the fire together with a *supārī* or coconut put in a spoon of *ghee*.

om pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidaṁ, pūrṇāt pūrṇamudacyate |
pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya, pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate ||
om pūrṇādarvi parāpata, supūrṇā punarāpata |
vasneva vikrīṇā vahā, iṣamūrja gvang śatakrato svāhā ||
om sarvaṁ vai pūrṇa gvang svāhā ||

bṛha.u. 5.1, yaju 3.49

Vasordhārā

The last and biggest offering of *ghee* is called *vasordhārā* which symbolises goodwill and affection. At the beginning of the *yajňa*, seven *āhutis* were given and now at the end the offering should be on a much larger scale. In the *vasordhārā* the *ghee* is offered in an unbroken flow and much more *ghee* is used than in other offerings. Usually it happens that the participants have plenty of enthusiasm and energy at the beginning of a programme but by the time it comes to an end, they become slack and indifferent. How-

ever, in a *yajña* there should always be greater enthusiasm at the end than that was at the beginning. Those who start their journey on the religious path are inspired by various motives but once they have started then every step taken is with more and more energy and commitment and slowly but steadily they become totally immersed in the *yājnic* principles of life.

While offering the *vasordhārā āhuti* the feeling should be that the god of the *yajña* may give us ability and strength to make life a steady stream flowing with love towards noble thoughts and deeds.

om vasoḥ pavitramasi śatadhāraṁ,
vasoḥ pavitramasi sahasradhāram |
devastvā savitā punātu vasoḥ, pavitreṇa śatadhāreṇa supvā,
kāmadhukṣaḥ svāhā | 1.3

Nirājanam Ārati

The significance of the *ārati* is that the knowledge, goodness and blessings of the *yajña*-god should spread far and wide and his glory be declared in all directions by the blowing of conch-shells, ringing of bells and sounding the gong. Each participant should stand while the *ārati* is performed. Money is offered by those present in the *ārati* which indicates a co-operative effort. The actual *ārati* of the *yajña*-god can only be done by re-solving to awaken and spread the light of knowledge. This tradition should not be limited to the performing of the ritual only but its inner significance should be spread amongst as many people as possible. This is a duty of all of us which is symbolised by the act of doing the *ārati*.

Decorate the *ārati thālī* with flowers etc and light the lamp. After sprinkling water all around three times, the *ārati* should be performed. Subsequently again, when the *ārati* is over, water should be sprinkled three times and the flame taken amongst all those present. All this should be done by one representative person. If

necessary the number of *ārati* lamps could be increased depending on the size of the gathering.

om yaṁ brahmavedāntavido vadanti,
paraṁ pradhānaṁ puruṣaṁ tathānye |
viśvodgateḥ kāraṇamīśvaraṁ vā,
tasmai namo vighnavināśanāya ||
om yaṁ brahmā varuṇendrarudramarutaḥ,
stunvanti divyaiḥ stavaiḥ,
vedaiḥ sāṅgapadakramopaniṣadaiḥ, gāyanti yaṁ sāmagāḥ ||
dhyānāvasthita-tadgatena manasā, paśyanti yaṁ yogino,
yasyāntaṁ na viduḥ surāsuragaṇaḥ, devāya tasmai namaḥ ||

Ghṛtāvaghrāṇam

The drops of *ghee* which are put in the vessel of water after each offering of *ghee* get coagulated in the water. This vessel should be taken around amongst the gathering and each one should dip the fingers of his right hand in this coagulated *ghee* and rub it in both palms. While saying the *mantra* both hands should be so placed near the *yajña kuṇḍa* as if they are warmed by the fire. This receiving of the *ghee* is a symbol of the blessing of gods for those who wish to create an atmosphere wherein their lives are totally encompassed by the *yajña* message, those whose eyes are filled with it, whose ears are always resounding with its voice, whose tongues are forever speaking about it and whose nose can always get the smell of divinity of the sacred ritual.

om tanūpā agne'si, tanvaṁ me pāhi |
om āyurdā agne'si, āyurme dehi ||
om varcodā agne'si, varcome dehi |
om agne yanme tanvā', ūnantanma'āpṛaṇa ||
om medhāṁ me devaḥ, savitā ādadhātu |
om medhāṁ me devī, sarasvatī ādadhātu ||
om medhāṁ me aśvinau,
devāvādhattāṁ puṣkarasrajau || pā.gṛ.sū. 2.4.7-8

Bhasmadhāraṇam

Life in the physical body comes to an end in a heap of ashes. How foolish it is for man to be consumed by his own greed, false attachments and pride when it all ends in a handful of ashes. If he had wisdom and had ever understood this undeniable truth, he would probably have based his activities on more solid and imperishable foundations so that he would never have to regret the misuse of the precious gift of life. Death can come at any time and this beautiful body of ours which we cherish with such care will become just a heap of ashes in one moment of time. The ashes from the *yajña*-fire is smeared on the forehead so that this truth is firmly engraved in the mind. This is also put on the forehead as a symbol of knowledge, on the neck to indicate speech and on the arms to denote action. Our mind, speech and actions should be so attuned to the divine that we always do such deeds which can lead us to our goal of self-realisation. The ashes of the *yajña*-fire are smeared on the back of the vessel and taken with the middle finger and put wherever indicated by the *mantra*.

om trayāyuśaṁ jamadagneḥ, iti lalāte |
om kaśyapasya trayāyuśaṁ, iti grīvāyām |
om yaddeveṣu trayāyuṣam, iti dakṣiṇabāhumūle |
om tanno astu trayāyuśam, iti hṛadi | 3.62

Kṣamā Prārthana

To be able to see our own faults, to make amends to those whom we might have caused harm and to remove the hurt and mis-understandings of those whom we might have treated unfairly are the signs of a truly noble person. In the same way we should ask the gods to forgive us for any mistakes we might have made in following the procedures of the *yajña*. By admitting our errors and omissions we not only ourselves feel relieved but can

also remove the grudges of the aggrieved person. This self-analysis and introspective criticism of ourselves shows a generous attitude towards others and is a sign of goodness and nobility. The ritual of asking forgiveness at the end of a *yajña* is done leads to a habit of such behaviour and attitude. All should stand up and say the *mantras* keeping the above aim in mind.

om āvāhanaṁ na jānāmi, naiva jānāmi pūjanam |
visarjanaṁ na jānāmi, kṣamasva parameśvara! ||1||
mantrahīnaṁ kriyāhīnaṁ, bhaktihīnaṁ sureśvara!
yatpūjitaṁ mayā deva! paripūrṇaṁ tadastu me ||2||
yadakṣarapadabṛaṣṭaṁ, mātrāhīnaṁ ca yad bhavet |
tatsarvaṁ kṣamyatāṁ deva! prasīda parameśvara! ||3||
yasya smṛatyā ca nāmoktyā, tapoyajñakriyādiṣu |
nyūnaṁ sampūrṇatāṁ yāti, sadyo vande tamacyutam ||4||
pramādātkurvatāṁ karma, pracyavetādhvareṣu yat |
smaraṇādeva tadviṣṇoḥ, sampūrṇaṁ syāditiśrutiḥ ||5||

Saṣṭāṅga Namaskāraḥ

Recognising the all-pervasiveness of *Virāt Brahman* and this universe as His manifestation and the faith that what ever there is in this world, seen and unseen, gross or subtle, sentient or in-sentient is Him and Him only, one can but humbly bend one's knees and touch the ground with his head to pay obeisance to this Supreme Being. By so doing, he surrenders himself totally to Him with reverence and intense devotion and expresses his resolve to remember His presence in all things always.

om namo'stvanantāya sahasramūrtaye,
sahasrapādākṣiśirorubāhave |
sahasranāmne puruṣāya śāśvate,
sahasrakoṭīyugadhāriṇe namaḥ ||

Śubhakāmanā

This *mantra* invokes the blessings of the gods for the well-being of all and wishes that we should have no ill-feelings towards anyone nor wish anyone any harm. Even if relationships have become bitter with someone still we should pray for his well-being and have no hatred for anyone because our own well-being is based on the well-being of others. There is always some selfishness lurking in the mind even when working for the welfare of others and we should be able to accept this and keep on praying for the good fortune of others. This *mantra* is a manifestation of these feelings. Everyone should spread out both their hands, with palm upwards, in a gesture of appeal and chant the *mantras*.

om svasti prajābhyaḥ paripālayantāṁ,
nyāyyena mārgeṇa mahīṁ mahīśāḥ |
gobrāhmaṇebhyaḥ śubhamastu nityaṁ,
lokāḥ samastāḥ sukhino bhavantu ||1||
sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ, sarve santu nirāmayāḥ |
sarve bhadrāṇi paśyantu, mā kaścid duḥkhamāpnuyāt ||2||
śraddhāṁ medhāṁ yaśaḥ prajñāṁ,
vidyāṁ puṣṭiṁ śriyaṁ balam |
teja āyuṣyamārogyaṁ, dehi me havyavāhana ||3||

laugā.smṛ.

Puṣpāñjaliḥ

This is a farewell ritual. The gods have been welcomed and have been received by the chanting of *Puruśa Sukta mantras* and now they will be given a farewell with flowers. Everyone takes some flowers or rice coloured with saffron and sandalwood. *Puśpāñjali manras* are chanted and the gods are showered with flowers. Garlands and bouquets can also be presented. Flowers are considered to be the symbol of simple faith and to offer them is to express our feelings of reverence and faith.

Both godly and demoniac tendencies prevail in this world in the form of light and darkness. They are the higher and lower parts of our nature or what we know as unselfishness and selfishness.

One of the two has to be prominent to make the other ineffective. If we are impelled by mere selfish urges then we are inclined towards greed, pride, desires, attachments and we will always be engaged in gratifying their demands. In such a state of mind neither can there be any impulsion to do good deeds nor can there be any time for them. But if godliness is innate in our nature then there is always enough time to do deeds for the welfare of the society even after doing our minimum duties towards ourselves and our families. The path of evil is full of troubles and leads towards sins while godliness takes us higher and higher towards divinity. Which do we choose? Which path should we follow? The answer is given at the time of *puśpāñjali*. Offering flowers to the gods to bid them farewell means that godliness is precious to you and you have chosen your path which you will always follow.

om yajñena yajñamayajanta devāḥ,
tāni dharmāṇi prathamānyāsan |
te ha nākaṁ mahimānaḥ sacanta,
yatra pūrve sādhyāḥ santi devāḥ ||
om mantra puṣpāñjaliṁ samarpayāmi ||

Śānti - Abhisincanam

The *kalaśa* of water kept in the pure surroundings of the *yajña* dais contains within itself all those divine virtues which help and encourage the physical health, mental peace and spiritual growth of human beings. The water of the *kalaśa* should be sprinkled on all those present through the means of a flower and pray that the material and spiritual gains of the *yajña* should become available to all, through the medium of this water and that they should move from untruth to truth, from death to immortality, from darkness to light.

om dyauḥ śāntirantarikṣa gvang śāntiḥ
pṛathvi śāntirāpaḥ śāntiroṣadhayaḥ śāntiḥ |

vanaspatayaḥ śāntirviśvedevāḥ
śāntirbrahma śāntiḥ, sarva gvang śāntiḥ
śāntireva śāntiḥ, sā mā śāntiredhi || 36.17
om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ || *sarvāriṣṭasuśāntirbhavatu* ||

Sūryārghyadānam

This ritual is performed at the end of every worship. The inherent nature of water is to rise upwards. It becomes steam when it comes in contact with the heat of the Sun and spreads in the limitless sky. The devotee prays in this ritual that may his negative thoughts come in contact with the sun god and be purified and spread all over and may the restless limited human being be united with the limitless unchanging *Brahman.*

While facing the Sun, the water of the *kalaśa* should slowly be let out like a stream and be collected in a vessel_kept below. Later, this water offered to the Sun-god can be discharged in a holy place.

om sūryadeva! sahasrāṁśo, tejorāśe jagatpate |
anukampaya māṁ bhaktyā, grahāṇārghyaṁ divākara ||
om sūryāya namaḥ, ādityāya namaḥ, bhāskarāya namaḥ ||

Pradakṣiṇā

So far the devotees have only been sitting and reciting *mantras* with the use of the mind and words and the hands have been used to do the oblations. Now it is time to walk on the path of the *yājňic* life and on this depends the success and purity of life. Now starts the journey of doing noble actions. The *pradakṣiṇā* symbolises this journey. Start walking on whichever side is indicated in the *yajňa* for the *pradakṣiṇā*. In action that is done there are four stages 1) Resolution 2) Beginning 3) Effort and 4) Concentration. Any work done with the combination of these four will definitely be successful. This taking of the initial steps and completion of four rounds or *pradakṣiṇā* is like an introduction to the leading of a *yājňic* life. To

reach the goal of unity, balance, purity and love, it is necessary to adopt a life of worship, self- study, service and discipline. These are represented by the four *pradakṣiṇā* or circumambulations.

Everyone should turn right of the *yajňaśālā* and start the *pradakṣiṇā*. If the space does not allow everyone to take full rounds of the *yajňa*-dais then each one can stand in one place and turn towards all four directions which will make one full round - this *pradakṣiṇā* can be done once only. While taking the steps the glory of Mother *Gāyatrī* should be sung with folded hands. According to the time available either the *mantra* only is chanted or together with it a *śloka* of glorification.

om yāni kāni ca pāpāni, jňātājňātakṛatāni ca |
tāni sarvāṇi naśyanti, pradakṣiṇa pade-pade ||

Gāyatrī Stuti

jayati jaya gāyatrī mātā, jayati jaya gāyatrī mātā |
ādi śakti tuma alakha nirañjana, jaga pālana kartrī |
duḥkha-śoka-bhaya-kleśa-kalaha-dāridṛya-dainyahartrī |
jayati.....
brahmarūpiṇī praṇata pālinī, jagat dhātṛa ambe |
bhavabhayahārī jana-hitakārī, sukhadā jagadambe ||
jayati....
bhaya-hāriṇi bhava-tāriṇi anaghe, aja ānanda rāśi |
avikārī aghaharī avicalita amale avināśī ||
jayati.....
kāmadhenu sata-cita ānandā, jaya gaṅgā gītā |
savitā kī śāśvati śakti tuma sāvitrī-sītā ||
jayati.....
ṛag, yaju, sāma, atharva praṇayinī, praṇava mahāmahime
kuṇḍalinī sahasrāra suśumnā, śobhā guṇa garime ||
jayati.....

svāhā svadhā śaci brahmāṇi, rādhā rudrāṇī ।
jaya satarūpā vāṇī, vidyā, kamalā, kalyāṇī ॥
jayati.....
janani hama hain dīna-hīna, duḥkha dāridra ke ghere ।
yadapi kuṭila kapaṭi kapūta, taū bālaka hain tere ॥
jayati.....
sneha-sanī karuṇāmayi mātā! caraṇa śaraṇa dijai!
bilakha rahe hama śīśu suta tere, dayā dṛaṣṭi kījai ॥
jayati.....
kāma-krodha-mada-lobha-dambha-durabhāva-dveṣa hariye ।
śuddha buddhi niṣpāpa hṛadaya, mana ko pavitra kariye ॥
jayati.....
tuma samartha saba bhānti tāriṇī, tuṣṭi-puṣṭi trātā ।
sata māraga para hamen calāo jo hai sukha dātā ॥
jayati jaya gāyatrī mātā, jayati jaya gāyatrī mātā ।

Yajňa Mahimā

yajňa rūpa prabho hamāre, bhāva ujjvala kījiye ।
choḍa deven chala kapaṭa ko, mānasika bala dījiye ॥
veda kī bolen ṛacāyen, satya ko dhāraṇa karen ।
harṣa men hon magna sāre, śoka sāgara se taren ॥
aśvamedhādika racāyen yajňa para upakāra ko ।
dharma maryāda calākara, lābha den sansāra ko ॥
nitya śraddhā-bhakti se yajňādi hama karate rahen ।
roga pīḍita viśva ke santāpa saba harate rahen ॥
kāmanā miṭa jāye mana se, pāpa atyācāra kī ।
bhāvanāyen śuddha hoven, yajňa se nara narī kī ॥
lābhakārī ho havana, hara jīvadhārī ke liye ।
vayu-jala sarvtra hon, śubha gandha ko dhāraṇa kiye ॥
svārtha bhāva miṭe hamārā, prema patha vistāra ho ।
idaṁ na mama kā sārthaka, pratyeka men vyavahāra ho ॥
hātha joḍa jhukāye mastaka, vandanā hama kara rahe ।
nātha karuṇārūpa karuṇā, āpakī saba para rahen ॥

yajňa rūpa prabho hamāre, bhāva ujjvala kījiye ।
choḍa deven chala kapaṭa ko, mānasika bala dījiye ॥

Guru Vandanā

eka tumhīn ādhāra sadguru, eka tumhīn ādhāra ॥
jaba taka milo na tuma jīvana men,
śānti kahān mila sakatī mana men ।
khoja firā sansāra sadguru ॥ *eka tumhīn ādhāra.....*
kaisā bhī ho tairana hārā
mile na jaba taka śaraṇa sahārā ।
ho na sakā usa pāra sadguru ॥ *eka tumhīn ādhāra.....*
he prabhu! tumhīn vividha rūpo men,
hamen bacāte bhava kūpon se ।
aise parama udāra sadguru ॥ *eka tumhīn ādhāra.....*
hama āye hain dvāra tumhāre,
aba uddhāra karo duḥkhahāre ।
suna lo dāsa pukāra sadguru ॥ *eka tumhīn ādhāra.....*
chā jātā jaga men andhiyārā,
taba pāne prakāśa kī dhārā ।
āte tere dvāra sadguru ॥ *eka tumhīn ādhāra.....*
eka tumhīn ādhāra sadguru, eka tumhīn ādhāra ॥

Resolution for Creating a New World Order

1. We shall recognise God to be all-pervading and just to all and bring His law in our lives.

2. We shall consider the body to be a temple of God and so protect our health with discipline and regularity.

3. We shall make necessary arrangements for self-study and *satsaṅga* to guard against evil thoughts, anxieties and fears.

4. We shall always learn to exercise self-control on our senses, our mind, our time and our wealth and through practice bring about a discipline in their use.

5. We shall consider ourselves to be an integral part of the society and shall consider welfare of others as our own.

6. We shall always preserve dignity and decorum, avoid that which is shunned or prohibited, do our duties as citizens and be commited to the wellbeing of the society.

7. We shall consider honesty, responsibility, wisdom and courage to be indivisible parts of our life.

8. We shall create an environment of piety, simplicity, tenderness and respectability.

9. We shall rather remain unsuccessful by following the righteous path than be successful by adopting unrighteousness.

10. We shall judge a person and evaluate him not by his worldly success, abilities and talents but by his noble thoughts and good deeds.

11. We shall not do unto others what we do not wish to be done unto us.

12. We shall look upon every person of the opposite sex with a pure mind.

13. We shall use a part of our time, influence, wisdom, efforts and wealth for the spread of noble thoughts in the world.

14. We shall give more importance to discriminative wisdom than to traditions.

15. We shall make efforts to collect together good people, fight against injustice and also take keen interest in the establishment of new, wholesome ideals.

16. We shall remain committed to national unity and equality and will not make distinctions on the basis of caste, gender, language, state or community.

17. Man is the maker of his own destiny. Having firm faith in this dictum we shall rise higher and higher and help others to improve themselves so that the world order will definitely change for the better.

18. We will change - world order will change; We will improve - world order will improve. We have complete faith in this dictum.

Visarjanam

Mother *Gāyatrī,* the *Yajňa* God, all other gods with their families and all others who have been invoked are now given an emotional farewell by showering flowers on the *yajňa* platform. If there is a shortage of flowers then yellow rice can be used instead. Together with farewell there is the prayer that we may receive such grace and blessings of gods over and over again.

om gaccha tvaṁ bhagavannagne,
svasthāne kuṇḍamadhyataḥ |
hutamāḍāya devebhyaḥ, śīghraṁ dehi prasīda me ||
gacchȧ gaccha suraśreṣṭha, svasthāne parameśvara !
yatra brahmādayo devaḥ, tatra gaccha hutāśana !
yāntu devagaṇāḥ sarve, pūjāmādāya māmakīm |
iṣṭakāmasamṛaddhyarthaṁ, punarāgamanāya ca ||

After this the *jayaghoṣa* (declaration of victory) and then the distribution of *prasāda* after which the programme is brought to a close.

Jayaghoṣa

1. *gāyatrī mātā kī - jaya*
2. *yajňa bhagavān kī - jaya*
3. *veda bhagavān kī - jaya*
4. *bhāratīya saṁskṛati kī - jaya*
5. *bhārata mātā kī - jaya*
6. *eka banenge - neka banenge*
7. *hama sudharenge - yuga sudheregā*
8. *hama badalenge - yuga badalegā*

9. *vicāra krānti abhiyāna - safala ho, safala ho, safala ho*
10. *jñāna yajña kī lāla maśala - sadā jalegī sadā jalegī*
11. *jñāna yajña kī jyoti jalāne-hama ghara-ghara men jāyenge*
12. *nayā saverā nayā ujālā - isa dharatī para lāyenge*
13. *nayā samāja banāyenge - nayā jamānā lāyenge*
14. *janma jahān para - hamane pāyā*
15. *anna jahān kā - hamane khāyā*
16. *vastra jahān ke - hamane pahane*
17. *jñāna jahān se - hamane pāyā*
18. *vaha hai pyārā - deśa hamārā*
19. *deśa kī rakṣā kaun karegā - hum karenge, hum karenge*
20. *yuga nirmāṇa kaise hogā - vyakti ke nirmāṇa se*
21. *mā kā mastaka ūncā hogā - tyāga aur balidān se*
22. *nitya sūrya kā dhyāna karenge-apanī pratibhā prakhara karenge*
23. *mānava mātra - eka samāna*
24. *jāti vanśa saba - eka samāna*
25. *nara aura nārī - eka samāna*
26. *nārī kā sammāna jahān hai - saṁskṛti kā utthāna vahān hai*
27. *jāgegī bhai jāgeī - nārī śakti jāgegī*
28. *hamārī yuga nirmāṇa yojanā-safala ho, safala ho, safala ho*
29. *hamārā yuga nirmāṇa satsaṅkalpa-pūrṇa ho, pūrṇa ho, pūrṇa ho*
30. *ikkīsavīn sadī - ujjvala bhaviṣya*
31. *vande-veda mātaram*

Deva Dakṣiṇā Śraddhāñjali

Each one of those present in the *yajňa* ritual should be required to give up any one of his vices either physical, mental or social as a *'dakṣṇā'* or gift given reverentially to the *yajňa*-god. The gods evaluate a person's faith and devtion on the basis of the extent of the courage he has in giving up his wrong ways and starting on the right path. This courage is that treasure by which the grace and blessings of the gods can be gained. On this occasion when all the gods are symbolically present, each one should offer gifts because the gods cannot be welcomed or bid farewell empty handed, without offering them anything.

Some of the negative thoughts which could be given up are given below.

Negative inclinations to be given up

1. Stealing, dishonesty, sinful earnings, living on the earning of others, making undue profits, unlawful dealings.
2. Eating meat and non-vegetarian food and using skin of dead animals, sacrifice of animals.
3. Puting others in difficulty to achieve selfish aims.
4. Taking jewellery and insistence on taking jewellery from the bride's parents.
5. Unnecessary spending of time and wealth in pomp and show during marriages.
6. Taking drugs - tobacco, alcohol, *bhaṅga, gāñjā*, opium etc.
7. Using harsh and abusive language.
8. Indulging in the display of fashion and wearing too many ornaments.
9. Wasting food in the kitchen as well as leaving food in the *'thālī'*.
10. Distinctions made on the basis of caste, creed, untouchability and social status.
11. Perpetuating tradition of *'purdāh'* and making it compulsory for others.
12. Discriminations made on the basis of gender or gender bias.

Qualities to be Encouraged

1. Daily worship of Mother *Gāyatrī* for at least ten minutes.

2. Giving respect to elders in the family.

3. Being mindful of the dignity of younger ones and not using derogatory language towards them.

4. Being vigilantly aware of duties and fulfilling them to the best of one's ability.

5. Creating a habit of working hard and being aware of the dignity of work.

6. Studying of scriptures and reading or listening to any literature which guides you on treading the right path, for at least half an hour every day.

7. Being always aware of and remind others of the significance of the *'śikhā'* and the *'yajňopavīta'* which are the symbols of *Hiṅdu* culture.

8. Living a life of simplicity and in accordance with Indian traditions and being proud of these traditions.

9. Saving at least one hour and 50 *paise* every day for spreading the message of the *yajňa* and other teachings based on the scriptures.

10. Celebrating your birthday every year in a general *yājnic* atmosphere and leading a disciplined life for the fulfilment of the goal of life.

11. Making a routine of doing worship, *ārati* etc everyday together with members of the family.

12. Always co-operating with all religious and cultural programmes designed for encouraging positive influences in society and always being aware of your duties towards family and to society.

A printed form listing above do's and don'ts should be distributed amongst those who are interested in this social reformation movement and they should be asked to fill this form. Whenever vice

has been given up it should be indicated by a tick mark with full name and address. Only those vices to be given up which are in you at the present time - those which might come up in the future need not be anticipated.

Those who are offering the *śraddhāñjali* should be blessed by a *purohita* by putting a *tilaka* and giving a garland of flowers. The resolution form, flowers and some rice should be kept in the right hand palm with the left under it and after reading out your resolutions you should stand quietly forming a queue and when your turn comes put all these articles in a *thālī* kept near the *yajña* dais.

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About the Author



Shriram Sharma Acharya, a pioneer of spiritual renaissance was born on 20th September 1911, in Anwalkheda, Agra District. He scrupulously carried out the biddings of his Guru, a great Himalayan Yogi, when he was fifteen years of age.

He took part in the struggle for independence as a volunteer, went to jail a number of times and embarked upon the task of social and moral upliftment through spiritual means in 1935 with the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi.

A sage, a visionary and a reformer, the Acharya initiated Yug Nirman Yojna, a mass movement for transformation of Era, lived a disciplined life of devout austerity, visited the Himalayas several times and attained spiritual eminence.

The Gayatri Pariwar fraternity, Shantikunj Ashram – an academy for moral and spiritual awakening, Brahamvarchas Research Institute – which strives to synthesize science with spirituality and over 4000 social reform centres (Shaktipeeths) are his greatest contributions to the modern world.

He wrote commentary on entire Vedic Vangmaya and accomplished a feat of writing more than 3200 books on all aspects of life.

The Acharya, Great devotee of Gayatri lived an ideal life for 80 years and voluntarily shed his physical sheath on Gayatri Jayanti, 2nd June 1990.